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The Mennonite

A discerning woman

January 2012

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- 'Invisible' curriculum
- A choice of weapons
- Anabaptist Teaching Centers
- A Bible to actually read
- Mennonites and the Occupy movement

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JAN 6 2012

38

ON THE COVER: Photo by Everett J. Thomas

CONTENTS

AMBS LIBRARY ELKHART IN

12 A discerning woman
—Patricia Burdette

16 A special section on Mennonite education
'Invisible' curriculum
—Laurie Oswald Robinson
A closer look at Mennonite higher education
—Rachel Nussbaum Eby

24 Christian formation
—Dave Stevens

27 A choice of weapons
—Mark McCormick

32 Mennonites join Occupy movements—Anna Groff

34 Harts honored for five decades of ministry
—Mennonite Mission Network

35 Optimism after Korea Anabaptist Center split
—Wil LaVeist

36 Top 10 Mennonite Church USA events—Anna Groff

38 Miller at MWC's helm for 22 years—Phyllis Pellman Good

39 EMM president gives inaugural address
—Linda Moffett

40 Everence gets first rebuke—Everett J. Thomas

41 Geyer's employment terminated—Everett J. Thomas

46 'Conflict minerals' needed for cell phones
—Everence

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
48 For the Record
50 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

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January 2012 | Volume 15, Number 1

The Mennonite is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries within Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals Postage Paid at Goshen, IN 46526 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite*, or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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The Mennonite
1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEB SITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
1700 S. Main St.
Goshen, IN 46526-4794
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 574-535-6050

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1819
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016

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—Editors

Where are the Occupy Mennonites?

On Nov. 3, 2011, I visited Occupy Denver, just a dozen blocks from my office. I was amazed to see and hear the protesters expressing sentiments that Mennonites, Anabaptists and other Christians have been claiming for decades, even centuries: hunger for social justice, solidarity with the poor and struggling, resistance to increasing corporate control of government and deep suspicion of Wall Street and banks that are too big to fail.

As I watch the Occupy movement gain in strength and popularity nationwide, I can't help wondering, Where are the Mennonites?

Mennonites have had a history of participating in nonviolent protests and social movements for generations. Hundreds of Mennonites participate annually in the protests against the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga. Mennonites protested against wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mennonites were active in protests against the Vietnam War. Mennonites even participated in the Civil Rights movement with Martin Luther King Jr. I don't know yet where Mennonites will fit into the Occupy Wall Street movement, but I will be disappointed if our voices are not part of the conversation. Our own dearest core values of social justice and solidarity with the poor are finally receiving national attention. Let us not squander the opportunity.
—Nathan Graber-McCrae, Denver

Mennonite missions

Regarding the November 2011 issue: Great article on John Powell. He was a big influence in my life from the time he spent in Hopedale, evidently just before he had to separate from the Mennonite Church (early 1970s?). I remember the compassion with which he shared in spite of what had to be intense inner turmoil. Thanks for his witness.*—Randy Springer, Hopedale, Ill.*

I must take a moment to thank you for the depth and richness of this year's edition on mission (November 2011). From the wonderful tribute to the life and service of John Powell to Everett Thomas' impassioned call to support mission across the street and around the world, it is a celebration of God's holistic mission through the global church called and sent. The editorial, Stanley Green's column and James Krabill's article add many helpful nuances to the common discourse on mission in the 21st century.*—Paula Killough, senior executive for advancement, Mennonite Mission Network*

There is one other "problem" that should be added to "Six Problems for Mission Agencies" identified in the November 2011 issue (Editorial). Nationally, and likely in the Mennonite church, there has been a huge shift of mission dollars from long-term programs to short-term mission trips—likely because of the immediate rewards of a hands-on experience.

When done well, these can have important educational benefits for participants, can build important relationships with local people and sometimes do some important work. But often the relationships end when the participants return home and the work they accomplish could have been done more efficiently by local people and provided needed jobs and income. When the real costs are calculated, the work done is often expensive. Sometimes because of cultural insensitivity and lack of quality preparation, short-term mission trips actually do harm to the local church by building dependencies and leaving the participants with simplistic and wrong stereotypes of local people and the meaning of mission.

In a world where mission involves reciprocity and partnership between strong autonomous churches around the world, the expertise and stability that mission agencies provide is needed, as are long-term relationships and culturally sensitive missionaries. They provide stability in difficult situations and do creative strategizing, which equips a missional church.—*John W. Eby, Dillsburg, Pa.*

I take issue with some of statements in the next to last paragraph of the November 2011 editorial. Regarding Japan, it is true that after World War II, in response to MacArthur's call for missionaries, many missionaries came; also, many Japanese then became believers.

Today, if your "4 percent of Japan is Christan" number came from *RJC World*, you would find a different view in the next sentences: "The statistics show that there are probably .5 to 1 percent who are actually members of a church. And only half of them actually attend a church." Yet the Japanese Mennonite churches on the island of Hokkaido, in the Tokyo area, in Osaka and in Kyushu are witnesses to two facts: (1) the first ones emerged because of the coming of missionaries, and (2) they grew and spread through the efforts of both the missionaries and the Japanese believers. You can find some of the facts about these early Mennonite missionaries in the Japan chapter of the forthcoming book published by the Institute of Mennonite Studies about Emma Richards, the first Mennonite Church woman to be ordained, as well as in the memoirs of Lee and Adella Kanagy.—*Nancy V. Lee, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Uneasy inheritance; trail of death

I was moved by the reflection of Marty and Marilyn Lehman on how they relate, as descendants of early settlers, to the story of dispossession and forced removal of the Potawatomi from Indiana (Leadership, December 2011).

I noticed a few years ago that, just like the seventh-grade history class of their youth, most articles on early Amish/Mennonite settlements in Mennonite publications began at the point where Europeans enter the picture.

In order to be able to tell more of the story, I suggest that all of us not indigenous to this land should be able to answer three basic questions about our homes: (1) Whose land was it before European conquest/settlement? (2) How did those people lose it?(3) Where are their descendants today?

Marty and Marilyn answered the first two questions well in their article; the significance of the third question is that it opens us to our relationship with those descendants today—in many cases a neglected relationship but a relationship nonetheless. Only when we recognize this can we take steps to work on that relationship. And it is this, the relationship today, that I have found transforming.—*Rich Meyer, Millersburg Ind.*

Why review R-rated movies?

My wife and I have deep appreciation for *The Mennonite*. We think a denominational periodical is an extremely important part of the Mennonite church's ministry. As we have in the past, we will continue to support *The Mennonite* financially.

Having said that, there is one thing the magazine does that concerns me. Specifically, the review of films, and especially the review of R-rated films on the Mediaculture page. Why is this a part of our church periodical? I understand the relevance of reviewing films that directly involve spiritual or moral issues. But otherwise, it does

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Each year, Mennonite Church USA focuses on its church schools during the first Sunday in February. In preparation for the 2012 Church School Sunday, we invited Mennonite Education Agency to provide two articles that remind us why our schools are so important. The first article examines the "invisible" curriculum in our schools (page 16). The second article addresses misperceptions some people have about our schools—starting with the misperception about the financial costs (page 20).

Our cover story focuses on Native American leader Carol Roth (page 12) whose childhood was in two worlds: Choctaw and Mennonite.

"I've learned the Anabaptist way of doing things as well as the Choctaw way of doing things," Roth says.

In this issue we also provide a meditation on the impact of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (page 27). Mark McCormick says: "When I tell young people that our government once referred to Dr. King as 'The Most Dangerous Negro in America,' they look at me like I'm crazy. It's as though to them he was just some kindly little racial Santa Claus peddling kindness."

This issue is also the first for new columnist John D. Roth, who intends to provide windows into the global Anabaptist community (page 9).

In the news section and editorial we focus on the Occupy Wall Street movement. On page 32, associate editor Anna Groff reports on the many Mennonites who are participating in the Occupy movement in their communities, while the editorial calls for careful discernment about such involvement.—*Editor*

Mennonite Church in India marks 100 years

DHAMTARI, India—The Mennonite Church in India, celebrated its 100th anniversary Oct. 27-30, 2011, at the Sunderganj Mennonite Church, Dhamtari, Chattisgarh, India.

Around 1,000 people attended the sessions, planned by the church's moderator, Bishop C. F. Nath, the executive secretary, Madhukant Masih, and the chairman of the program committee, Rev. Wickson J. Victor.

The Mennonite Church in India is a member of Mennonite World Conference.—*Myron S. Augsburger*

Nobel Laureate helps spark women's program

HARRISONBURG, Va.—In her Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech on Dec. 10, 2011, Leymah Gbowee called on women around the world "to unite in sisterhood to turn our tears into triumph, our despair into determination and our fear into fortitude."

Gbowee, the leader of a women's movement that helped end 14 years of warfare in Liberia in 2003, earned a master's degree in conflict transformation from the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., in 2007.

"In many societies where women used to be the silent victims and objects of men's powers, women are throwing down the walls of repressive traditions with the invincible power of nonviolence," Gbowee told listeners at the Nobel Peace award ceremony in Oslo, Norway, including EMU president Loren Swartzendruber in Row 27.

Swartzendruber says he found Gbowee's speech "inspiring and passionate." His host in Norway, international peace scholar Peter Wallensteen of Sweden, called it "powerful." Gbowee asked for a moment of silence for women who have died while working for peace, including the late Dekha Abdi of Kenya.

Gbowee and Abdi last met when they joined 18 other women peacebuilders from nine countries in June 2011 to discuss whether EMU should host an educational program tailored to women working for justice and peace around the world. She was a former student and instructor at EMU's Summer Peacebuilding Institute under its CJP. CJP plans to launch this program in the 2012 Summer Peacebuilding Institute. Another EMU person at the Oslo ceremony was Joshua Mensah, a sophomore who is Gbowee's firstborn child.—*Bonnie Price Lofton of EMU*

Manitoba pastor to chair MennoMedia board

HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ontario—Melissa Miller, pastor of Springstein Mennonite Church southwest of Winnipeg, Man., will chair the eight-member binational board of MennoMedia, starting this month.

MennoMedia was formed last July from a merger of Mennonite Publishing Network in Scottdale, Pa., and Third Way Media in Harrisonburg. It is a ministry of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.

Miller succeeds Phil Bontrager, who was on the board (which previously served Mennonite Publishing Network) since 2003 and chaired the board since 2005.

In addition to her duties as a pastor, Miller is a part-time counselor at Recovery of Hope in Winnipeg. She also served on the Leadership Credentialing Committee of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

Miller was appointed as chair of the MennoMedia board by the Joint Executive Committee of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.

She has a master's degree in psychology from the University of Waterloo as well as a master of divinity degree from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. A native of Pennsylvania, Miller earned her undergraduate degree at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg.

She authored a book for Herald Press, the book imprint of MennoMedia: *Family Violence: The Compassionate Church Responds* (1994). She coauthored, with Phil Shenk, *The Path of Most Resistance* (1982).—*Steve Shenk*

Canadian Foodgrains Bank/Carol Thiessen

Conservation evangelist

The health and productivity of Sukoluhle Moyo's cornfields in Zimbabwe has made her an "evangelist" for conservation agriculture. She learned about the farming method through United Church of Canada, a partner Mennonite Central Committee supports with equity from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.—*MCC*

Israeli army demolishes house, arrests women

SOUTH HEBRON HILLS—On Nov. 24, 2011, the Israeli army, with more than five jeeps and two bulldozers, drove into the small village of Um Fagarah and demolished two houses and the village mosque. During the demolition, they arrested a 21-year-old woman and a 17-year-old girl.

One of the demolished homes belonged to a widow and her family; the other housed an extended family of 20. The soldiers did not have demolition orders or give any explanation for the demolitions but called the village women "whores" and entered at a time

Jean S. Pfeiffer

Fall celebration in Sarasota

Samantha Diaz (left), Kimberly Hernandez and Ana Castro perform a dance Nov. 13, 2011, at Bay Shore Mennonite Church in Sarasota, Fla. The dance was part of Southeast Mennonite Conference's annual music service, which included an African-American church, two Hispanic churches and four Anglo churches. For the past two years the celebration has also included a multicultural meal.—*Jean S. Pfeiffer*

of day when most of the men were away at work.

The second family's 21-year-old daughter confronted the Israeli soldiers when they marched into their home and threw the bedding outside. When she asked what they were doing, one soldier said, "Get out of my sight."

The daughter refused; in response, the soldier sprayed her in the face with tear gas.

The other solders kicked her as she fell to the ground. Her mother and her neighbors tried to pull her out of the way, but another soldier pushed the mother away, and the older woman fell, breaking her leg.

The 17-year-old tried to bring water to her cousin to soothe her eyes inflamed by the tear gas. The soldiers arrested them both, and as of Nov. 27, they were imprisoned in Jerusalem.

The villagers began reconstruction of the mosque, and people from the surrounding villages came to support the action, including two people from the International Solidarity Movement and members of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Israel demolished over 170 homes in 2011, displacing roughly 880 people.—*CPT*

Grateful for help, Henry Schmitt leaves legacy

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Henry Gunther Schmitt never forgot the lifesaving help he and his family received from Mennonites in war-time—and more than 70 years later, he left a legacy of generosity to Mennonite institutions, including Bethel College.

Schmitt, of San Bernardino, Calif., died Aug. 2, 2010. He remembered Bethel and other schools, as well as charitable organizations, in his will.

Schmitt was born in Java, Indonesia, in 1931. During World War II, his father and grandfather were taken prisoner and subsequently lost their lives. The rest of the family escaped and received help from various Mennonite church agencies.

Schmitt came to the United States as a young man and put himself through medical school. During his career, he worked in pharmacology, internal medicine and radiology.

He never forgot his experiences during the war, and he gave generously of his resources to others as a way of saying thank you to those who had helped his family.—*Bethel College*

First Nations housing crisis complex, says MCC

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—While media attention has focused on the shortage of houses and lack of water and sewage systems in the Attawapiskat First Nation community in northern Ontario, many other First Nations communities are experiencing similar problems, says a spokesperson for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada.

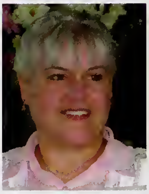
As the populations in First Nation communities continue to grow, the demand for housing, water and sewage systems will also increase, says Harley Eagle, co-coordinator of MCC's indigenous work program.

The housing crisis, he says, is "part of an old story" that cannot be resolved by the Canadian government through externally imposed solutions that have been developed without consultation.

Eagle believes the basis of lasting solutions for the housing crisis and other problems experienced by Indigenous Peoples can be found in the treaties, the historic agreements between the Crown and First Nations that establish promises, obligations and benefits to both parties. The deplorable housing situation in Attawapiskat First Nation has prompted the community to declare a state of emergency.

MCC Ontario has a 20-year history of building relationships with people in the Attawapiskat community. In response to a request from the community it is shipping 1,000 winter blankets, 500 hygiene kits and 25 relief kits to Attawapiskat.—*MCC Canada*

In our end is our beginning



Donna Mast is conference minister for Allegheny Mennonite Conference.

I don't like endings. I'm sad when I come to the end of a good book, wishing there was more to read. I look forward to seeing friends and family who live far from me. But when the time comes to say goodbye, I struggle with tears. Every move we've ever made—even when I've looked forward to a new location—has been difficult because of the need to say goodbye.

So here I am at another ending. It has been a privilege to write regularly in *The Mennonite*. I was surprised to have been asked to contribute to this column, and I remember struggling over whether or not to accept the offer. Friends prayed and counseled with me. When one said, "Donna, use your voice for the church," I finally accepted and began to write.

Writing is hard work. Trying to discern what to write has been challenging. And often, after sending my contribution in, I have wished to recall it, believing what I'd written to be too simplistic, too mundane.

Yet many of you have found ways to tell me that something I had written was meaningful for you. Some of you have even told me that you've filed a few of the articles away to revisit at another time because of the way they touched your lives. For this I am extremely grateful. Your kind words of affirmation kept me doing the hard work of writing.

I hope you are stopping to think right now just how important words of affirmation are to any person who is offering the little they have to Jesus—like the boy with five small barley loaves and two fish. Hmm, I wonder if anyone thanked that little boy for offering his lunch to Jesus. I would guess Jesus did. And then Jesus took that boy's small offering and did something amazing with it, feeding more than 5,000 people, with leftovers to feed more.

Each ending also holds a beginning, but all these things are for God to know and for us to discover.

It always amazes me when I realize that God's Spirit has taken some small thing I've said or written and used it in the life of another. But I shouldn't be so amazed. That's how God works. God gifts us for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ.

When we willingly offer the gifts God has given us, the church benefits, and God is glorified. So I claim the gift of writing as a God-given gift, and I hope you are claiming and using your God-given gifts as well.

But the time has come for me to stop writing articles for this column. Allegheny Mennonite Conference has called me to be their full-time conference minister, and this column was created for the purpose of hearing from pastors of congregations. I no longer pastor a congregation.

Jesus wasn't talking about writing when he said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains just a single seed; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

He was talking about endings (his earthly life) and beginnings (a new reality of life). His words invite us to consider endings and beginnings in new ways.

Natalie Sleeth picks up similar themes in her poetic song, "In the bulb there is a flower." Each bulb contains a flower, each apple seed an entire tree, cocoons contain butterflies and winters hold the promise of spring. Each ending also holds a beginning, but all these things are for God to know and for us to discover.

The old needs to give way to the new. The end of my contributions to this page means that someone new will now be able to voice what God is laying on his or her heart for the benefit of the readers of *The Mennonite*. I pray that God will fill my replacement with eloquent words that deepen and broaden our understandings of and relationship with God and the church. I pray that this person will delight in God's giftings and joyfully enter the commitment and hard work of regularly writing for this column. I pray that both the new writer and the readers will be blessed, the Body of Christ will be strengthened and God will be glorified as this person joins the other gifted writers who regularly contribute their thoughts to this page.

It has indeed been a privilege to write for you. Thanks for reading. TM

Editor's note: *Cyneatha Milsaps, pastor at Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill., will replace Mast in writing for this column. Cyneatha's first piece will appear in our May issue.*

Chilean Mennonites enrich the fold

Last May, the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Chile (Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile, or IEMCH) officially joined Mennonite World Conference, thereby becoming MWC's 100th member. Likely, the news did not register with many. After all, IEMCH is a small conference—14 congregations and 1,200 members—and our attention is rarely captivated by distant events that seem to have little bearing on our daily lives. Yet buried in the story of MWC's newest member are hints of a profound revolution unfolding before our eyes.

In 1980, there were approximately 600,000 Anabaptist-Mennonites in the world, most of them living in Europe or North America. Today, only a few decades later, the Anabaptist-Mennonite family numbers more than 1.7 million members scattered in 85 countries. The overwhelming majority of our members now live outside Europe and North America, with the largest groups concentrated in Ethiopia and the Congo. From the perspective of a 500-year-old tradition, we are witnessing—in our own lifetime—a transformation of historical proportions. A theological tradition born in Europe and nurtured in the steppes of South Russia and the fertile soil of North America is now experiencing astounding growth and vitality in dozens of cultures around the globe.

For most of us, this is not a new realization. After all, our congregations have always supported overseas missionaries; our members have served with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC); our young people have done short-term mission or service trips; and our living rooms reflect the international decor of the local Ten Thousand Villages store. We know that our church, like the economy, has gone global.

But at the same time, we are not quite sure what this means or how it matters. After all, what difference does it make to my congregation if a group in Chile decides to cast their lot with the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family? What do we have in common with them? And what does it actually mean to be part of a "global church"?

If pressed on the question, one reflex is to think in historical or tribal terms. In joining "our" story, we might assume, the new Mennonite congregations in Chile will now need to trace their history to the Radical Reformation of the 16th century, with the churches of North America and Europe serving as the crucial bridges to that source of their new identity.

Or we may focus on theology, assuming that as the global Anabaptist family grows, the churches of North America will maintain "quality control." The congregations in Chile are welcome if they meet our criteria of Mennonite theological orthodoxy, defined perhaps as the Anabaptist Vision, *The Politics of Jesus* or *The Naked Anabaptist*.

At a gathering last fall celebrating the completion of the Global Mennonite History series—including a new history of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement in Latin America by Jaime Prieto—Titus Guenther hinted at an alternative approach to thinking about the global church. Guenther, who teaches theology and missions at Canadian Mennonite University, told the story of how the IEMCH decided to join MWC. In the early 1980s, several independent congregations emerged in poor neighborhoods in and around the city of Santiago committed to a ministry that joined social work with evangelism. Their primary outreach was among the poor, offering vocational training for young people and pastoral support to alcoholics and drug addicts. In 1989, with encouragement from Jorge Vallejos Sr.—a Chilean church planter who had emigrated to Canada—the congregations explored their Mennonite identity and formed the IEMCH.

In subsequent years, church leaders took note of the ministry of MCC in Bolivia, especially the way its outreach moved across boundaries of race, culture and class. Daniel Delgado, the group's president, read Anabaptist history and was moved by the story of Dirk Willems. In 2009, representatives of IEMCH returned from the MWC assembly in Paraguay hungry for more teaching on Anabaptist subjects, even as their own ministries among the poor continued to flourish.

Questions of history and theology matter to IEMCH. But at a deeper level the group is seeking new friendships in a desire for deeper Christian discipleship. And they bring with them a host of gifts, without which our church and our understanding of Christian faithfulness is not complete.

The parable of the shepherd who went out looking for the missing sheep ends with an account of "great rejoicing" (Luke 15:6). What was our church missing before IEMCH joined MWC? What does it mean to be "in the fold"? Can we join in the celebration that there are now 100 members of MWC, rather than 99? TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

What difference does it make to my congregation if a group in Chile decides to cast their lot with the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family?

How to make math more relevant to students

I did OK in math way back in high school, but I didn't love it. I also recognized its basic uses in my later life, though I can't say I've ever put to use (or even remember) what I learned in trigonometry. While few would argue with the importance of math for anyone wanting to be an engineer or an actuary, how necessary is it for the rest of us?

In a *New York Times* op-ed piece, "How to Fix Our Math Education," Sol Garfunkel and David Mumford tackle the widespread anxiety in our country about the poor performance of American students on various international tests.

Garfunkel is the executive director of the Consortium for Mathematics and Its Applications, while Mumford is an emeritus professor of mathematics at Brown University.

They challenge the assumption that there is a set of mathematical skills that everyone needs to know to be prepared for 21st-century careers. Instead they argue that "different sets of math skills are useful for different careers, and our math education should be changed to reflect this fact."

My older brother said to me many years ago, "I graduated from high school without being taught how to write a check." Others can update that example, since many today don't write checks.

Garfunkel and Mumford point out the "highly abstract" curriculum of American high schools today, which offer a sequence of algebra, geometry, more algebra, pre-calculus and calculus. Then they ask, "How often do most adults encounter a situation in which they need to solve a quadratic equation? Do they need to know what constitutes a 'group of transformations' or a 'complex number'?"

No doubt learning about these is useful to professional mathematicians, engineers or physicists, but "most citizens," write Garfunkel and Mumford, "would be better served by studying how mortgages are priced, how computers are programmed and how the statistical results of a medical trial are to be understood."

The math curriculum they envision would still expose students to the abstract tools of mathematics but would focus on "relevant problems that lead students to appreciate how a mathematical formula models and clarifies real-world situations."

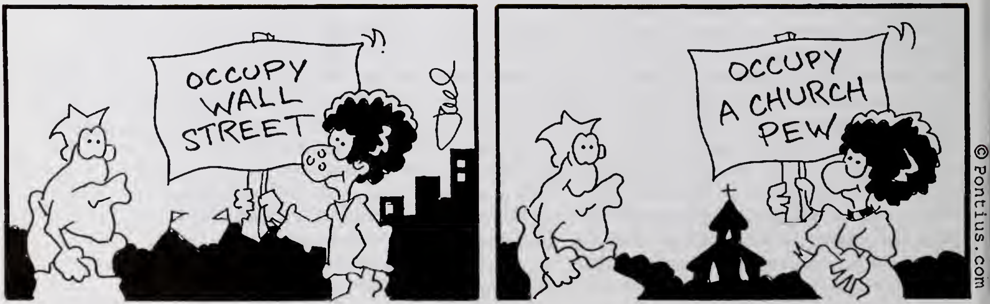
They ask us to imagine replacing the sequence of algebra, geometry and calculus with a sequence of finance, data and basic engineering. They then offer an example of such an approach: "In the finance course, students would learn the exponential function, use formulas in spreadsheets and study the budgets of people, companies and governments. In the data course, students would gather their own data sets and learn how, in fields as diverse as sports and medicine, larger samples give better estimates of averages. In the basic engineering course, students would learn the workings of engines, sound waves, TV signals and computers."

Garfunkel and Mumford call this approach a combination of "quantitative literacy," which is "the ability to make quantitative connections whenever life requires (as when we are confronted with conflicting medical test results but need to decide whether to undergo a further procedure), and 'mathematical modeling,' the ability to move practically between everyday problems and mathematical formulations (as when we decide whether it is better to buy or lease a new car)."

Those fellow students of mine back in high school who protested, "Why do I need to study math?" had a point, even if they were mainly interested in not studying it at all. Much of education involves motivation, and making math relevant is a good motivator.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann



—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “One-way giving tends to make the poor objects of pity, which harms their dignity. It also erodes their work ethic and produces a dependency that is unhealthy both for the giver and the recipient.”—Robert Lupton, founder of FCS Urban Ministries and author of *Toxic Charity*, in Religion News Service

Churches pull money from big banks

A small but growing number of religious communities across the country are removing their money from Wall Street banks to protest what they see as unfair mortgage foreclosures and unwillingness to lend to small businesses. The New Bottom Line coalition of congregations, community organizations, labor unions and individuals is promoting a “Move Our Money” campaign with the goal of shifting $1 billion from big banks to community banks and credit unions.—*Religion News Service*

$9,393

Amount each pathological gambler costs society each year—*Christian Reflection*

50 years of journalism

In its November-December 2011 issue, *Columbia Journalism Review* celebrated its 50th anniversary. It included the following comparisons of numbers:

- Number of daily papers in the United States in 1961: 1,761; in 1985: 1,676; in 2009: 1,387
- Number of households with cable (in thousands): in 1961: 725; in 1985: 38,170; in 2009: 62,874
- Approximate cost per megabyte of computer memory (2010 dollars): in 1960: $38.6 million; in 1986: $378; in 2010: $0.014

To prison or to college

The United States has the highest incarceration rate per capita of any country in the world. It is sixth in the world in its number of college graduates. It costs $37,000 a year for a student to go to Princeton University and $44,000 per year to house an inmate at the New Jersey State Prison in Trenton. Between 1987 and 2007, higher education spending increased 21 percent, while corrections spending went up 127 percent.—*Christian Century*

So much for polls

When asked how much of the federal budget is spent on such aid, Americans say 25 percent. How much should it be? They say about 10 percent. But foreign aid is only about 1 percent of the budget.—*Mennonite Weekly Review*

Numbers to ponder

- Pounds of carbon dioxide each square meter of public forest in western Washington and Oregon soaks up per year: **1.1**
- Pounds of carbon dioxide emitted from driving one mile: **1.1**
- Number of acres of federal and state forest land in Oregon and western Washington: **11.8 million**
- Number of acres of forest needed to soak up the two states’ carbon emissions from gasoline: **23 million**
- Percentage of Americans receiving Social Security retirement who say they “have not used a government program”: **44**
- Percentage of Americans receiving unemployment insurance who say they “have not used a government program”: **43**
- Average number of people killed annually in shark attacks from 2001-2010: **4**
- Number of sharks killed annually by people: **26-73 million**
- Percentage of age 18 or older married, in 1960: **72**
- In 2008: **52**

—*Yes! Magazine*

Tithing, church spending hit record low

Tithing to U.S. Protestant churches as a percentage of income is at its lowest level in at least 41 years, according to a new report, and churches are keeping a greater share of those donations for their own needs. Parishioners gave about 2.38 percent of their income to their church, according to “The State of Church Giving through 2009,” a new report released Oct. 14, 2011, by Empty Tomb Inc., a Christian research agency in Champaign, Ill.—*Religion News Service*

Non-Arabic Muslim world

The four countries with the largest Muslim populations are neither Arabic nor Middle Eastern.

1. Bangladesh—141,065,000
2. India—76,903,000
3. Pakistan—71,375,000
4. Indonesia—65,811,000

—*Christian Century*

A discerning woman

"Growing up in a missionary home and being a PK (preacher's kid) have made me more sensitive to building relationships," says Carol Roth, Choctaw, of Clinton, Miss. Her infectious smile and bright brown eyes invite me into the conversation.

by Patricia Burdette

Carol Roth serves Communion at a Pittsburgh 2011 worship service. Photo by Everett J. Thomas

Carol Roth's Mennonite-Choctaw upbringing has equipped her to build bridges within the church.

Carol is sensitive to the two cultures she grew up in as well. When she and her twin sister, Rosa Lee, were infants, their biological parents, Emma Lee and Leonard Wallace, asked missionary workers at what is now the Choctaw reservation in Neshoba County, Miss., if they would care for them for one winter so the twins could survive; the Wallaces, itinerant agricultural workers, had five children under the age of three. After that first year, the Wallaces asked the missionary workers, Ethan and Shirley Good of Harrisonburg, Va., if they would continue to take care of the twins.

"Part of the arrangement," says Carol, "was that my sister and I would attend funerals, family gatherings, birthday get-togethers and other events on the reservation that would keep us in touch with our family and culture." This required the Goods to take the twins on 30-minute trips over rugged dirt roads from Mashulaville to Pearl River from time to time, but it was a commitment they kept.

In this way, Carol and her sister were raised in a Mennonite home but stayed connected to their Native American culture. This unusual bicultural upbringing seems to serve Carol well in both American and Choctaw cultures. Yet because she was raised mainly in the dominant Anglo culture, Carol says she has had to find "people who were willing to answer my questions about Choctaw culture and traditions, such as: Are Choctaw dances the right thing to do? Do I allow my children to dance? Which dances should they be doing?" While learning to understand such things has been a significant personal challenge, Carol says, "I have been able to use this challenge to learn more about my culture and to serve God."

Now a staff leader for Native Mennonite Ministries, Carol says, "my life experience has made me aware of the needs and feelings of Native Americans not raised in their own cultures, and I am sensitive to the differences among the Native American congregations I work with in my Native Mennonite Ministries role. While there are some aspects of Native American culture that are present in most tribes, each tribe has its own distinctive qualities that need to be respected."

Called to serve her people

Carol met her husband, Mark Roth, who is from Tavistock, Ontario, when he came to Mississippi as a Mennonite Board of Missions (now Mennonite Mission Network) voluntary service worker in 1986. Mark returned to Canada in 1987 after his voluntary service term ended. Two years later, in 1989, Mark and Carol were married. After their marriage, Carol and Mark lived in Canada, where Mark worked as a bookkeeper at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ontario.

"During this time, I began to discern God calling me to serve my people—the Choctaw—through the church, but I didn't want to nag Mark about returning to the U.S.," Carol says. "I prayed that God would put that same calling in Mark's heart. And God did," Carol beams. In 1990, they were on their way back to Mashulaville, Miss., to minister to the Choctaw people.

> While there are some aspects of Native American culture that are present in most tribes, each tribe has its own distinctive qualities that need to be respected.—Carol Roth

"We chose not to live on the reservation, but our home—just 10 minutes off the reservation—became a place for people of the community and the church to come, sit and talk," she says.

Mark worked to adapt to Choctaw culture, and, Carol says, "The Choctaw people accepted him into their community and tribe."

Mark served Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church in Preston, Miss., as a pastor with Ethan Good—who with Shirley had raised Carol and her twin sister—and later became the senior pastor when Ethan retired, serving in that role for 14 years. Carol was a vital part of the ministry at Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite as the pianist and song leader as well as the adult women's Sunday school teacher. "Mark and I were also the youth sponsors for some 20 teens in the church. We really had a good time doing that," she says.

Now a chaplain at the Baptist Hospital in Clinton, Miss., about 90 miles away, Mark is still called upon to conduct funerals in Philadelphia, Miss., for some of the Choctaw. The Roths now attend Open Door Mennonite Church in Jackson, Miss., a Gulf States Conference congregation.

Carol, who has served the Mississippi Band of ▶

Carol Roth anoints Stanley Green at a Pittsburgh 2011 worship service. Photo by Everett J. Thomas

Choctaw Indians as tribal court administrator, believes she has been called to serve God with her gifts for administration and to minister among Native American people. "There was no lightning but sensing the leading of the Lord through friends and in conversations," she says.

In 2007, both Carol and Mark volunteered with Native Mennonite Ministries (NMM)—a constituent group of Mennonite Church USA that includes 12 active congregations in seven states—and in 2008 they were hired as staff leaders. In 2009, Carol became the sole staff person for NMM when Mark began working as a chaplain. "Mark still volunteers for NMM," Carol says, "but he no longer is a staff person."

Carol explains that when they were hired as NMM staff, "one of the key needs identified ... was 'someone to visit our congregations.' Because Native American churches are located so remotely, the people and the leadership long for connections with the broader church."

As she does this visiting, she looks for leaders and youth who can be paired in mentoring relationships and for those who can serve the broader church. "One of my dreams is to be able to bring pastors of Mennonite Native churches together for a retreat so that they can connect with and be resources for one another," she says.

When Carol goes to meetings, she chooses to drive. She says this gives her peaceful "alone time," and she can enjoy the scenery as she travels. She even drove to meetings in California from her home in Clinton.

Because Carol still has children at home (Cody, 21, at the University of Southern Mississippi; Gabriel, 15, and Jonathan, 10), she is careful not to say yes to every request to serve. "Before responding, I spend time in prayer to discern what God is calling me to do," she says. While Carol knows that her sons and her husband can manage without her, they still miss her when she is traveling to Native Mennonite congregations and to meetings in the wider church. "I travel a good deal," she says, but emphasizes, "I talk to each of them at least once every day."

Each year Carol and Mark discern a passage of Scripture or a concept to focus on for the coming year. Over the years, they have found several Psalms to be especially meaningful. One year they focused on the concept of peace. Carol shared that their verse for 2011 was 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." "For me, things need to be tangible, so rather than being dependent on materialism, I want to walk by faith," she says.

A passion for connection and healing

When she reflects on the administrative and direct ministries she is involved with, Carol says, "I—as one person—am helping the greater good.

"I want to contribute my knowledge to others and learn from them, too," she adds. "I see myself as someone who can connect the Native American churches to one another as well as connect leaders and potential leaders from these congregations to the broader Mennonite church."

"My passions and visions for the church are in the area of racial reconciliation," Carol says. As a member of Mennonite Church USA's Intercultural Relations Reference Committee—which has representatives from Native Mennonite Ministries, African-American Mennonite Association, Iglesia Menonita Hispana and Asian constituents—she notes, "Mennonite Church USA is striving to work with and incorporate the gifts of people in its ethnic constituency groups."

Carol is also involved in Mennonite Church USA's antiracism work as a member of the Racial Healing Task Force. "This healing is slow going, and there is much more work to be done," she says. While three area conferences have expressed a willingness to work on racial healing, "What about the other 18 conferences?" she wonders aloud. "The dominant culture can apologize, but the ethnic constituency groups have healing to do as well," she says.

Connecting Mennonite women

Carol also applies her passion for making connections as a member of the board of Mennonite Women USA.

"I would like to see more Native Mennonite women's groups become active with local Mennonite Women groups," she says. She advises choosing meeting times in the evenings or on Saturday mornings, since many women work outside the home. "They need to know that today's women's groups are no longer all about quilting all day."

Carol likes to think outside the box with her Native Mennonite women's group, helping them come up with creative ways to bring women together for service and learning. "We have made Choctaw bead crafts to be sold to raise funds for causes such as Mennonite Central Committee, and we have held cooking classes to use commodities (nonperishable food given to Native Americans by the Federal Department of Agriculture) in healthy and delicious recipes," she says.

Rhoda Keener of Shippensburg, Pa., co-executive director of Mennonite Women USA, who also has served with Carol on Mennonite Church USA's Constituency Leaders Council, says, "I've appreciated Carol's gifts as a bridge person, as she is able to relate authentically to different cultures. In group settings she brings a depth of thought and wisdom in her responses."

A bridge builder

Carol grew up walking in two worlds: Mennonite and Choctaw.

"When I was young, I thought everyone grew up this way," she says. "As an adult, I think it has been good for me. I've learned the Anabaptist way of doing things as well as the Choctaw way of doing things."

"For example, for Mennonites, hospitality tends to mean cooking special foods, setting the table with your best table linens and dishes, and making things especially nice when people come to eat with you," Carol says. "For Native Americans, the sharing of food is about the friendship, not the proper etiquette." Therefore, Native Americans generally serve what they have and take time to visit with their guests. "These kinds of cultural differences can easily create misunderstandings, so I try to educate each culture about the other."

In the same way, Carol says she is often asked by people in the dominant culture why cultural elements such as dances and drums are not used in Native American worship.

"Each tribe is different, and symbols mean different things to individual tribes, so it is important to be careful and discern what can be used that will not offend others," she explains.

While Carol's first language is English, she has learned Choctaw over the years. "I enjoy speaking Choctaw, but it has caused me to struggle with English at times," she says.

"I am a slow thinker," she says. "I am not always ready to answer questions as quickly as others are. Also, Native Americans tend to process questions and plan what they will say in response, so it takes them longer to answer. I have tried to convey this cultural characteristic to the larger church to increase understanding."

> I have gained a wealth of knowledge from one-on-one conversations with Native American people and with people in the larger church.
> —Carol Roth

As Carol has become more involved in leadership in the church, she says she has sensed God's leading through others, "especially leaders in Mennonite Church USA." Naming Glen Guyton, Rhoda Keener and LaVern Yutzy, she says, "Their lives and the examples they set have been a shaping force in my life."

Glen Guyton of San Antonio, Texas, director for constituent resources for Mennonite Church USA, says, "Carol is a true example of a servant leader who leads with her heart. She carries out her ministry with joy and enthusiasm. It's a pleasure to work with her; she loves God and is passionate about representing the people God has entrusted her to lead."

LaVern Yutzy of Lititz, Pa., a consulting associate with Mennonite Health Services Alliance, says of Carol, "I appreciate Carol's commitment, her gifts and her willingness to make a difference in congregational settings and beyond."

Carol says, "I am so blessed to connect with all these people. I have gained a wealth of knowledge from one-on-one conversations with Native American people and with people in the larger church. I hope I have been able to contribute my knowledge to others, too."

Patricia Burdette serves as editor for Mennonite Women USA, including timbrel *magazine. She is married to Rob Burdette, and they have five children and nine grandchildren.*

How Mennonite education yields high grades in life formation

'Invisible' curriculum

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Aliese Gingerich (right) of Iowa Mennonite School in Kalona, Iowa.
Photo provided IMS

Playing basketball at Iowa Mennonite School (IMS) in Kalona, Iowa, did not yield many wins for Aliese Gingerich and her teammates." If I were playing basketball to win games, I would not have been playing at IMS," Gingerich says. "But over the four years of playing together, we learned how to use our losses to bring us together rather than tear us down; we learned how to support each other, maintain a positive attitude and keep God central in our ambitions."

She goes on: "Because our entire school reinforced compassion and respect for others, it was easier to do that on the team. … When you are part of a smaller school that needs everyone to be part of some activity, you learn to branch out and be more comfortable with yourself and others."

It wasn't only the academics in the classroom—as important and excellent as they were—that were formative for Gingerich. Countless interactions outside the classroom with friends, coaches, teachers and mentors set her in good direction for her future, she says.

"Invisible curriculum" hidden but powerful: Gingerich is one of hundreds of students in elementary and secondary schools across Mennonite Church USA who is encouraged to develop emotionally, socially and spiritually as well as academically. Faculty and staff in schools belonging to Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) strive to value students as gifted people, created and loved by God.

In turn, students are encouraged to develop attitudes of peaceful living, serving and growing in communities of grace, joy and peace that transcend their formative years as they move beyond their home communities into young adulthood.

That shaping starts as early as birth, says June Hershberger, director of Diamond Street Early Education Center in Akron, Pa., a ministry of Akron Mennonite Church. The center is a member of MSC and the Mennonite Early Childhood Network, an organization that provides information and support for parents and early educators of children, birth through kindergarten.

Students at Diamond Street Early Education Center in Akron, Pa. Photo provided MEA

Hershberger helps her staff identify and embody those aspects of their school that give them the added and often invisible value of an Anabaptist perspective.

"John D. Roth, in his new book, *Teaching That Transforms*, describes the 'invisible curriculum' that includes teachers who are full of joy and curiosity that becomes contagious with the children," she says. "He also describes how the soil in which Anabaptist classroom pedagogy takes root needs to be carefully cultivated and tended throughout the entire school.

We train our students to better manage conflicts through using new skills, behaviors and attitudes.—Barbara Moses

"Everyone on site—the janitors and people in the kitchen as well as teachers and administrators—must care about the children's development. … This pedagogy is also developed in a culture of worship and attentiveness to tradition as well as a focus on conflict reconciliation."

The conflict resolution endeavors at Diamond Street make the "invisible curriculum" visible for Rosa Pérez Perdomo and Hommy Perdomo, who have enrolled their children—Isabelle, 2, and Sebastian, 4—at the center. The couple is especially grateful for how the center has helped their son become more peaceful and cooperative at school and at home.

"Our son, who has a more difficult time with transitions than other children his age, was enrolled in a large, very high-tech preschool," Rosa Pérez Perdomo says. "But he was not able to adjust, and we were getting calls to pick him up in the middle of day.

"But we haven't gotten one call since we moved him to Diamond Street. I attribute that to loving teachers who care about him and nurture him in all his social and emotional development. … The other school didn't seem to have what Diamond Street has—teachers who see their teaching as a calling rather than just a job."

Peacemaking shaped by model of Christ, Scriptures and social-service trips: Mennonite schools seek faculty and staff who see their jobs as a calling to provide excellence in academics as well as life skills such as peace- and community-making. This is especially crucial in an urban

Students at Philadelphia Mennonite High School. Photo provided

setting where violence can tend to be more concentrated and communities can tend to be less cohesive, says Barbara Moses, principal of Philadelphia Mennonite High School.

"From birth on up, the entire culture around them models that when you have a conflict, you fight," Moses says. "From home to television to the city streets to the world, all they often see is people at war. ... Since all conflicts can't be totally resolved, we train our students to better manage conflicts through using new skills, behaviors and attitudes."

The school provides a conflict management class for all ninth graders. Some students in 10th grade teach their new skills to fifth and sixth graders at Carnell Public Elementary School on Friday afternoons, she says. The program is in cooperation with Oxford Circle Mennonite Church.

The homeless people [students] meet frequently don't fit the stereotype because some of them are college graduates from middle-class backgrounds who had good incomes but lost jobs due to changing family or economic circumstances.—Jeff Hackman

Christopher Dock Mennonite High School. Photo Tim Moyer

But a focus on peace- and community-making is just as important for suburban schools that travel beyond their communities. For example, Lake Center Christian School in Hartville, Ohio, has instituted an annual mission trip to the Dominican Republic, a program called "Meeting God in Missions." Homerooms have students pray for one junior or senior going on the trip before, during and after the experience.

Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, Va., sponsored Discovery 2011. A group of 40 students last summer learned about environmental issues as they explored many environments across the United States.

Eastern Mennonite School Photo provided MEA

Sophomores at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School in Lansdale, Pa., take a field trip into Philadelphia to connect with historical sites and experience the urban setting. Juniors take a three-day trip to Washington, D.C., to focus on rich-poor, powerful-powerless dichotomies as part of a Social Issues class. Both trips are part of the school's four-year "building community" curriculum, which culminates with the senior "kingdom living" experience that includes job shadowing and service experiences—locally and globally.

Jeff Hackman, a U.S. history and economics teacher at Dock who has led many of the three-day trips, says: "The homeless people they meet frequently don't fit the stereotype because some of them are college graduates from middle-class backgrounds who had good incomes but lost jobs due to changing family or economic circumstances. They learn that homelessness can happen to anyone."

Ron Hertzler, a religion and social studies

Bethany Christian students Photo provided MEA

teacher at Dock, has also led many such trips. He says: "These trips are excellent opportunities for getting kids out of the classroom and into the settings where history actually happened, such as standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech."

The arts as well as social, historical and service opportunities help form Mennonite students, says Allan Dueck, principal for Bethany Christian Schools in Goshen, Ind. He cites how the annual MSC music festival also provides broadening experiences for students. This year, the festival will celebrate its 50th anniversary at Central Christian School in Kidron, Ohio.

"This event is a cross-pollination of schools," he says. "Students see that they are not a tiny microcosm unto themselves in their home communities, where they feel strange because they are being taught to see the world differently from peers who go to public schools.

"Rubbing shoulders with Mennonite kids from across the United States as well as students from Puerto Rico help them identify and own a commonality of Christian values among diversity in culture and background."

One-on-one mentoring most powerful influence of all: As powerful as the large-group experiences are, one-on-one mentoring can be the most powerful, says Dueck. For example, Bethany sponsors a mentoring program that matches a teacher and a student for the middle school years and another mentor for the high school years.

Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School (LMS) faculty, staff and students agree with how powerful one-on-one relationships can be that happen in unstructured and serendipitous moments between classes, during extracurricular activities, service trips and informal Bible studies on and off campus.

"One of the greatest blessings of my years at LMS was the encouragement and support from my teachers," says Isaiah Rivera, a 2011 LMS grad. "Teachers such as Marcella Hostetler, Dean Sauder and Kris Horst really encouraged me to live my life for Christ, to follow my dreams and to excel in whatever it is I love and want to do in the future."

Many LMS senior presentations identified Kris Horst, a high school English teacher, as someone who helped with his caring presence. "I think mentoring is part of living out the Anabaptist value of informal discipling that happens as we befriend each other," Horst says. "The Anabaptist model of community, while it considers what we believe and what we know to be important, puts a higher value on how we practice those beliefs in our relationships.

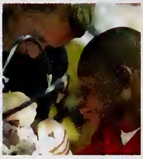
WE ALL NEED
CLEAN WATER
CHEMICAL

Lancaster Mennonite Middle School science class Photo by Jonathan Charles

One of the greatest blessings of my years at Lancaster Mennonite School was the encouragement and support from my teachers.
—Isaiah Rivera

"A lot of students have great relationships with their parents and their congregations, but they want that extra sounding board. ... Mentoring from teachers helps make the home, school and church experience more seamless as they make decisions today that will impact tomorrow."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a freelance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.



A closer look at Mennonite higher education

Addressing misperceptions about Mennonite higher education

by Rachel Nussbaum Eby

Above: Campus of AMBS, Elkhart, Ind. Photo provided MEA
Title inset and right photo: Goshen College students Photo Jodi H. Beyeler

Those who work at a Mennonite higher education institution often find themselves addressing perceptions about Mennonite education that aren't accurate or are incomplete. What about those who never ask questions? How do they get a closer look at Mennonite higher education? The best people to ask are the alumni and students of Mennonite higher educational institutions—Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind.; Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.; Bluffton (Ohio) University; Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) in Harrisonburg, Va.; Goshen (Ind.) College; and Hesston (Kan.) College.

I'm a Thresher

Bethel College students

Photo provided MEA

The "price tag" is only the starting point. "What surprises many parents is discovering that they are eligible for financial aid after thinking they wouldn't be eligible for any," says Tony Graber, director of financial aid at Bethel College. "The majority of students are eligible for more aid at Bethel than at a state school in Kansas."

Erin Bradley, a Bethel College sophomore, agrees with the importance of contacting Mennonite colleges to get a financial aid estimate to compare with other colleges. "Costs were a lot cheaper at state schools, but when I got back information, they provided fewer opportunities for scholarships and less financial aid from the school," she says.

"We first determine if a student can qualify for scholarships from the college—such as academic scholarships and performance scholarships for athletics and fine arts," says Graber. "Bethel College also offers a service learning scholarship where the recipient agrees to volunteer in the community."

Next, eligibility for grants is determined. Need-based grants include the Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and state grants. The Teach Grant for students who commit to teaching at a Title One school is an example of a grant that is not need-based.

High school counselors can help identify additional scholarships, especially local ones. Internet scholarship searches are also helpful, although Graber cautions that no one should ever pay for this service but only use free searches. Many churches provide funds that Mennonite colleges, universities and seminaries will match up to a certain amount.

After figuring in free assistance, loans can then be applied to for the remaining balance. Some loans are need-based and some are not. "In some cases, part of certain loans can be forgiven," says Graber, "if a student works as a public servant or for a nonprofit organization."

"I understand why some would be scared of the sticker price of education," says Saulo Padilla, alum of Goshen College and AMBS, "but I also know the benefits that having a higher education brings … so, I invite others to take a leap of faith into Mennonite higher education."

At each level of education, the learning is different—both in style and in content.
—Laura Amstutz

A Mennonite college education is not the same as your Mennonite high school; neither is a Mennonite seminary education the same as your Mennonite college/university.

"I went to Central Christian School, Bluffton and EMS," says Laura Amstutz, communication coordinator and associate director of admissions for EMS. "At each level of education, the learning is different—both in style and in content. You go deeper into details and specifics the more education you get."

Jonny Gerig Meyer, from Goshen, agrees: "At Bethany [Christian School], I was ready to hear some things. Then at Goshen College, I was in a different place—cognitively and emotionally—and heard different things and internalized them differently. The same for AMBS. Any overlap is minuscule compared with the breadth of what there is to learn."

Education from an Anabaptist perspective is unique.

"My Mennonite education enriched my life with

EMU Photo provided MEA

cultural knowledge, spiritual values and lifelong friendships with both fellow students and professors," says Sara (Richer) Conn, a 2009 Bluffton graduate from Wauseon, Ohio.

Lynette Nussbaum, originally from Salem, Ore., also found college life-changing: "In my classes at both Hesston and EMU, I was not only taught facts and theories but also pushed to explore how what we were learning applied to my life, others around me, the global community and my faith."

"Going to [Hesston and Goshen] saved me in some ways," says Nathan Ramer, the pastor at Wellman (Iowa) Mennonite Church, who is also an alum of AMBS. "I was in an environment where people who cared walked with me, allowed me to wrestle with questions and then were still there with biblical wisdom and a caring perspective to help me begin to piece things back together. Professors modeled that our intellect was something God gave us to use as tools of faithfulness, not something to be suspicious of or divorced from issues of faith."

I am very excited when I see more brothers and sisters from different ethnic and racial groups attending Mennonite educational institutions. —Saulo Padilla

Hesston Disaster Management class blitz build project Photo provided MEA

"Even if you've grown up in an 'ethnic Mennonite' population center like myself," says Gerig Meyer, "it's really helpful to be surrounded by a loving community that can provide a safe environment to challenge each other. I think Mennonite educational institutions are uniquely qualified to do this."

You do interact with those from diverse backgrounds.

"Bluffton is one of the most diverse Mennonite campuses. I had a circle of about five close friends, and none of them grew up Mennonite," says Amstutz. "Many of them came to embrace Mennonite faith and practices, but they didn't start that way.

"When I was a student at EMS, there was a strong United Methodist contingent. Now there are even more denominations represented," says Amstutz. "The students from different denominations bring interesting contrasts into class discussions."

The number of racial/ethnic people on Mennonite educational campuses is growing, and faculty, staff and students continue to work at ways to keep dialogue open.

"Because of the various student-led initiatives and support of key staff, I believe EMU became more welcoming to those with different backgrounds and beliefs and created many bridges during the time I was a student [1994-98]," says Moniqua Acosta, who works for MHS Alliance.

"After attending Goshen College and AMBS, I found a deep affinity with Anabaptist Mennonite theology," says Padilla. "I am very excited when I see more brothers and sisters from different ethnic and racial groups attending Mennonite educational institutions."

The quality of the programs and faculty were praised by all those interviewed.

Janna Hunter Bowman, a Notre Dame doctoral student, says: "When I first contacted the Kroc Institute for International Peace at Notre Dame and explained my interest in peace studies from a theological perspective, the director of doctoral studies suggested I study at AMBS for my master's degree. He had no way of knowing that I was a Mennonite, much less that I was already doing so."

"I feared that having a degree from a Mennonite college might make me look less qualified than a graduate from an art institute," says Sara (Richer)

Bluffton pottery class Photo Tommy Thompson

Conn, a graphic designer for The Limited in Columbus, Ohio. "However, during interviews, I was able to focus on the excellent qualities an individual gains [through the Bluffton] experience."

"Some teachers have told me that EMU student teachers seem better prepared coming into student teaching than those from other colleges and universities," says Lynette Nussbaum, now a special education teacher at Harrisonburg High School. "I know the experience I already had in the classroom helped me feel prepared when I started teaching."

Seminary is for people of all ages and all educational backgrounds.

John Stoltzfus, a former Amish boy with only a ninth grade education, heard about a certificate program at EMS for people 35 years and older who do not have a high school or college diploma. Encouraged by friends and family, he earned his GED and enrolled in EMS.

"It was a major challenge and quite a change from being a truck driver," says Stoltzfus. "The first month I wanted to quit, but with the encouragement of students and staff, I stayed. I am glad I did; it was worth it."

Stoltzfus was invited into the degree program, graduated at the age of 48 and is now pastor of East Holbrook Mennonite Church in Cheraw, Colo.

Seminaries offer online classes and other options.

"Seminary provided tools, perspective and opportunity for reflecting on my experiences that my daily life and work did not afford," says Hunter Bowman, who was able to take online courses from both seminaries while serving in Colombia.

"What I wasn't prepared for was the richness of the dialogue in the discussion forums of the EMS distance education classes," says Terry Zehr, the assistant conference minister for New York Mennonite Conference. "In a classroom, the extroverts tend to speak out, while introverts speak less frequently. In discussion forums, everyone speaks equally, and everyone is heard."

An increasing number of courses are available online from both seminaries in addition to weekend, interterm and summer courses.

Seminary is not just for pastors and soon-to-be pastors.

EMS Photo Lindsey Kolb

"Social work taught me skills to problem solve, respect people and focus on resiliency, but I realized that my social work training did not give me language to talk about holistic health," says Alicia Horst, director of the New Bridges Immigrant Resource Center in Harrisonburg, Va. "Theological education at EMS allowed me to sit with pain. I can now listen to stories of trauma, frustration, misunderstanding and despair and notice how the Spirit is at work."

Seminary helped me articulate my calling even though I don't work in a congregation.—Jonny Gerig Meyer

"Many people at seminary are not studying to be a pastor but do some form of church work or view their work in a religious sense like I do," says Jonny Gerig Meyer, adjunct professor of philosophy at Goshen College. "Seminary helped me articulate my calling even though I don't work in a congregation."

These stories are only a small sample of what students and alumni are talking about. Not only do the people in this article have much more to share than can be contained here, the students and alumni you know have their own stories to share. Why don't you ask them?

Rachel Nussbaum Eby is director of communications for Mennonite Education Agency.

Three biblical models

Christian formation

The leadership of Mennonite Church USA has identified Christian formation as our number one ministry priority. I affirm this emphasis because the purpose of the church is to form disciples of Jesus Christ for the world.

by Dave Stevens

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Below I offer three biblical models through which congregations may understand the process of spiritual development as they seek to nurture the growth of followers of Jesus.

Model #1: The gathered-and-sent pattern of discipleship

(Mark 3:14)

The gathered-and-sent model adopts the pattern of life demonstrated by Jesus' ministry with his own disciples. This model focuses on the formation of the follower of Jesus (disciple, apprentice) in two alternating and mutually reinforcing movements: gathering in the Lord's presence as a community of sharing, learning and replenishment (Mark 6:30) and being sent forth into the world to serve in his name (Mark 6:7ff.). These two movements are mutually reinforcing because authentic and purposeful Christian gathering directs the growing disciple to being sent, to participation in God's world mission. On the other hand, authentic and empowered sending or participation in God's mission, necessitates continued gathering. God's Spirit energizes the Christian community with these two symbiotic impulses: Centripetal movement (towards the center/Christian community) and centrifugal movement (away from the center/toward the world).

The gathered-and-sent model encourages each follower of Jesus to be engaged in ministry to the world in some way appropriate to her or his life stage. Gathering times then become opportunities to celebrate, share, support and replenish and where disciples gain further equipping to return to their various venues of service. This is the cycle Jesus demonstrated with his own disciples (Mark 6:30).

The Faith Mennonite, Zion Mennonite and Casa Betania congregations in the Newton, Kan., area enact this gathered-sent model in a creative way. These churches postpone their usual morning worship and Sunday school one Sunday each year. On this Sunday, the people go out to serve the community in various work projects. After the work day, they gather for worship at 4 p.m. That worship includes people sharing stories about the day, work done and relationships made. The DOOR Project also has an intentional pattern of interspersing kingdom labor with gathering for worship and shared reflections. These are just two examples of this rich symbiosis for cultivating disciples.

Model #2 I-we-all: the self in disciple perspective

(Psalms 66-67)

The I-we-all model focuses on the formation of the follower of Jesus in three relationship dimensions: relationship to self, to faith community and to the world (that is, I, we, all).

Psalms 66 and 67 reflect awareness of each of these dimensions. The two adjacent poems in the Psalter are linked by the word "bless" (Psalm 66:20, 67:1). Most importantly for our purposes, they are composed of alternating units that intersperse the three relational realities: A unit emphasizing the first person singular ("I, me, my") alternates with units concentrating on the first person plural ("we, us, our") and units focused on an even wider inclusive group ("all"). The structure of these alternating units can be outlined briefly as follows: 66:1-

7—"all"; 66:8-12—"we, our, us"; 66:13-20—"I, me, my"; 67:1—"us"; 67:2-5—"all"; 67:6-7a—"us, our"; 67:7b—"all."

This structure suggests three interconnected meanings of the follower of Jesus that are essential for spiritual formation. First, each person must come to understand himself/herself as an individual before God or Jesus—as an "I" (e.g. Galatians 2:19b-20). This "I" in biblical perspective is the self made in God's image, precious in God's sight and empowered for right living. Second, each "I" is also part of a "we," a faith community of nurture (e.g. 1 Peter 2:9-10). God calls individuals to be part of a people, named Israel in the Old Testament and the church or body of Christ in the New. Third, the "I" and "we" participate with God and Jesus in mission to "all," that is, to humankind and creation beyond the self and faith community (e.g. Ephesians 1:9-10).

Several passages illustrate the I-we-all concept. In Genesis 12:1-3, God addresses the individual (the "I") Abram/Abraham, forms him into a community ("a great nation"), which becomes God's partner to bless all the families of the earth. This Abrahamic identity was adopted by the church in Acts 3:25. Similarly, in John 15:9-17, Jesus directs the love God has placed within each ("I") of his "friends" to the willingness to lay down their lives for one another ("we"), and beyond that, for the ultimate purpose that they will go and bear fruit in the world ("all"). Jesus' prayer in John 17:1-26 likewise includes three sections displaying the same three relationship dimensions as Psalms 66-67: (1) vv. 1-5, Jesus prays for himself (that is, the "I"); (2) vv. 6-19, Jesus prays for the group(s) of his followers (that is, the "we"); (3) vv. 20-26, Jesus prays for future believers who will come to faith through the "we" (that is, the "all"). Finally, 2 Timothy 1 recognizes these three parts of the spiritual self. Timothy is personally indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He is nurtured by the faith models of his mother, grandmother and mentor Paul. And he is entrusted and equipped with the message of salvation for the world. God enables the ongoing spiritual development of disciples through these three interconnected and mutually enriching dimensions of personhood.

The I-we-all model encourages churches in their Christian formation programs, activities, resources and learning approaches to be attentive to including components that foster the experience of God in relation to self, church and world.

Model #3: Our stories and *the* story

(Deuteronomy 5:2-3; 6:4-9, 20-25; 26:1-11)

It has long been recognized that the Book of Deuteronomy is concerned about the transmission of faith from one generation to the next. The method of faith transmission put forth by the fifth book of Moses involves the interaction between the stories of people's lives and *the* story of the people's (Israel's) life. In Deuteronomy and in the Our-stories-*the*-story model of spiritual development, faith is formed as personal experiences are experienced in conversation with God's grand narrative of delivering and covenanting with a people.

More specifically, Christian formation through the lens of the third biblical model is the process of my story becoming shaped by *the* story. This means mapping our life journeys onto captivity and release, exile and restoration, death and resurrection. It is in this narrative reciprocity that we become followers of Jesus.

> God enables the ongoing spiritual development of disciples through these three mutually enriching dimensions of personhood.

Deuteronomy 5:2-3 is a remarkable passage. As the biblical story is passed on, each new generation of the faith community "becomes" the Sinai generation, stands before the mountain, sees the fire and smoke, makes the covenant with the Lord. We are not "grandfathered in" to the people of God; we are storied in.

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 describes the bringing of first fruits to the Temple. Each year when the Israelites experience God's abundant provision of food from the earth, they are to present samples as an act of worship. On this occasion they are to recite to the priest the historical drama of God's liberation of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt. But when they tell the story, it is not to sound like a history lesson or to sound like a piece of family lore about Great Aunt Sue and Uncle Elmer. It is not to be an ancestor tale. Rather, when they tell the story, Moses says they are to place themselves in the story, as if they themselves were there in those events of long ago. That is, they are not to say, "The Egyptians treated our ancestors badly" but, "The Egyptians treated us badly and oppressed us and placed hard labor upon us. Then we cried to the Lord. The Lord heard our voice, saw our affliction and brought us out and gave us this land that flows with milk and honey."

Moses says each new generation of God's people is to claim that historical drama as its own. Each new generation must place itself in the story. Each new generation cowers under the taskmaster, dabs the blood on the doorpost, walks through the sea, gathers the manna, chokes on the quail and hoists themselves up the bank of the Jordan. Moses tells Israel, "You become God's people as your stories are transformed by *the* story."

We are not "grandfathered in" to the people of God; we are storied in.

The power of God's epic relationship with Israel is further upheld by Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25. These verses appear particularly addressed to parents in the setting of home life. When children ask their parents the reason for the values that give meaning to their lives, parents are to tell them not only the rules but the stories. Verses 20-21 are important: "When your children ask you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your children, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out." The meaning of God's people-making law is connected to God's people-making story, which is a story of deliverance. Parents (and, by extension, all nurturers of faith) pass on a spiritual identity through storying. Moreover, "talk about them" implies more than just rote memorization but conversation around the word. Faith is developed by the integration of one's life-narrative and the biblical narrative.

Deuteronomy acknowledges the importance of two social locations for faith formation: the home and the gathered community. While Deuteronomy 6 highlights the home setting, Deuteronomy 29 accentuates the gathered community. Specifically, in Deuteronomy 29:2ff., Moses summons "all Israel" to hear God's story of liberation and providential care. Moses says, "You stand assembled today, all of you, before the Lord your God—the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your women and the aliens who are in your camp, both those who cut your wood and those who draw your water" (Deuteronomy 29:10-11). This all-inclusive assembly convenes in order to weave their stories into *the* story.

The partnership of home and gathered community in the formation of faith is expressed in many of our parent-child dedication services. Also, the Talkabout materials in the *Gather 'Round* curriculum encourage a holistic approach to Christian education in which family and congregation are linked together in the work of disciple building. Moreover, this third model encourages congregations to utilize mentoring, intergenerational contact and the sharing of faith journeys as components of spiritual development.

Finally we note that in Deuteronomy 6 there is a hint of a suggestion of informality to the setting of faith formation activities, whether in family or community: "When you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise." There are two implications. First, we are encouraged to recognize that spiritual formation opportunities (like "teachable moments") can happen anywhere, anytime. Second, churches may wish to rethink the largely school-adapted nature of our Sunday school furnishings and other décor and consider arranging the physical spaces used for events of spiritual nurture in ways that are homey, comfortable and conversation enhancing.

Conclusion

By placing faith formation at the center of our mission, the leadership of Mennonite Church USA is advancing a truly biblical priority. As conferences and congregations, camps and classes, youth groups and families consider pathways for spiritual development, it is helpful to have biblical models to guide our disciple-making.

The models presented here are certainly not the only possible biblical constructions. Moreover, they are conceptual models; each of them requires nuts-and-bolts refinement as well as contextualization in order to become actual Christian formation strategies in particular settings.

Today we are witnessing an explosion of interest in and resources for Christian spiritual formation: conferences, seminars, retreats, training institutes, workshops, organizations such as Renovare and Aprentis, websites, and new publisher imprints such as Formatio. The title Pastor of Spiritual Formation is appearing regularly on church staffs. All these show there's a hunger for spiritual formation. May our efforts fall "like showers on new growth" (Deuteronomy 32:2).

Dave Stevens is pastor at Eden Mennonite Church in Moundridge, Kan.

A choice of weapons

by Mark McCormick

National Archives and Records Administration

A meditation on the impact of Martin Luther King Jr.

Now that he is safely dead, let us praise him
Build monuments to his glory
Sing Hosannas to his name
Dead men make such convenient heroes
For they cannot rise to challenge the images that we might fashion from their lives
And besides, it is easier to build monuments than to build a better world
So now that he is safely dead, we with eased consciences will tell our children that he was a great man
Knowing that the cause for which he lived is still a cause
And the dream for which he died is still a dream
A dead man's dream—Carl Wendell Hines Jr. "A Dead Man's Dream"

When I tell young people that our government once referred to Dr. King as "The Most Dangerous Negro in America," they look at me like I'm crazy. It's as though to them, he was just some kindly little racial Santa Claus peddling kindness. We already have forgotten he was so much more than that—he was someone who, in his day, said that "extreme racism, extreme materialism, extreme militarism could become this country's downfall."

I see the character and ideas of Dr. King in the great photographer, writer and filmmaker Gordon Parks in Parks' book *A Choice of Weapons*, his story of choosing to respond to the violence and hate he suffered in Kansas as a child, with a camera, a typewriter and with a creative and curious mind.

"Even at 16, I was aware of the problems I faced and, quickly enough, I tried thinking about ways to survive. I would not go back to my sister's, and the distance back to Kansas was insurmountable. I never thought of the Salvation Army or some other charity. Yet there were other things I considered; one of them was robbery.

Violence is often a reaction, while peace is a choice, a courageous choice, a personal choice.

"I came closest the morning of my 17th birthday, when I found myself alone on the trolley with an elderly conductor. He poked me awake and stood there just above me, holding a bundle of bills wadded together in a rubber band. At the sight of them, my hand tightened about the switchblade in my pocket.

"I rose slowly, looking around to see who was about. We were alone. The operator had already gone to the café across the street. The conductor turned away from me and walked toward the rear of the car.

"Perspiration rolled from my armpits, and my anxiety must have shown on my face. I pressed the button, and the long blade popped out.

" 'Conductor!'

" 'Yes?' He turned and stared calmly at the blade. I looked back at him, trembling now, with all my mother's warnings coming hot at me.

" 'Conductor,' I said, 'would you give me a dollar for this knife? I'm hungry and I don't have any place to stay.'

"He continued to watch me for another moment. 'You can keep the knife,' he said. 'Come over to the café and I'll buy you a meal.'

"Still shaking and not knowing what to do, I closed the blade.

" 'I'm sorry,' I said.

" 'It's all right,' he said, peeling off two $1 bills. 'Go where you want and get some grub.'

" 'It's OK, I can manage.'

"He insisted. 'Take it, and keep yourself out of trouble.'

"I refused the money, jumped out of the car and hurried away, more ashamed than I had ever been in my life."

That's an example of how violence is often a reaction, while peace is a choice, a courageous choice, a personal choice.

Though it may sound tragic, this is not a story of violence but a story of peace. Though it may sound heartbreaking, this is not a story of woe. And though it may sound like divine providence, this is a story about a choice, a choice of weapons.

Random violence: Before my cousin Riccardo lost his son Robert to one of the most bizarre acts of random violence Wichita, Kan., had seen in years, Riccardo was celebrating.

As an assistant basketball coach at Wichita Southeast High School, Riccardo had just watched his team win a City League title. The win that night was particularly satisfying because that evening he'd watched this group of once selfish boys gel into a coolly efficient team willing to sacrifice their own scoring and profile for the benefit of the team.

After a boisterous celebration in the locker room, Riccardo was heading to a celebratory dinner when he got the call. The voice was hysterical, almost incoherent in its panic. "Robert's been shot. Robert's been shot. You have to come to the hospital."

Robert had cheered his dad on from the stands that night and was dropping off some friends after the game when he stopped at a traffic light. A young man in a car next to Robert's, a young man we'd later learn was high and drunk and who later wouldn't even remember the shooting, didn't like the way Robert had looked at him, so he pulled out a gun and fired at Robert's car.

Bullets tore through Robert's elbow and through both sides of his neck, severing arteries. Clutching at his wounds and still trying to drive, Robert drove less than a block before jumping the curb in a residential area close to Wesley Hospital. One of his friends in the car drove Robert the rest of the way to the hospital.

But Robert died before Riccardo could get there.

The case stunned the city. Hundreds of people filled St. Mark United Methodist Church for Robert's funeral. The attention spoke to the kind

BLUFFTON
UNIVERSITY

Peace Arts Center marks 25th year

Celebrating 25 years

Bluffton's Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center is in the midst of a yearlong celebration of its 25th year of promoting peacemaking to the campus and community.

Highlighting the fall activities was "Celebration of Peace: A Bridge Between Us," a conference for children in grades 3-7. More than 25 youngsters spent 24 hours at Bluffton learning how to build bridges of friendship with each other and with their neighbors, both across the street and around the world.

Among other things, "the children learned about others with disabilities through activities led by Bluffton students majoring in education, participated in team-building exercises with students in a recreation class and learned new games and songs from other cultures with Bluffton's international students," said Louise Matthews, director of the Lion and Lamb.

Bryan Moyer Suderman, guest musician at the conference, led the children in songs about God's love, building friendships and living in peace. "We focused on team building and how to build bridges with 'enemies' or those who are different than us who we wouldn't normally talk to," Suderman said.

During the closing program, the children presented school kits they had made during the conference. The kits contained school supplies that were sent to Mennonite Central Committee, "and then to those in need," said Joyce Schumacher, conference co-coordinator.

Lights, camera ... art

A summer 2011 job in Bluffton's public relations office offered senior Todd Trotter of Cincinnati, Ohio, a new opportunity to explore video production.

Working with Louise Matthews, director of The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center, Trotter filmed and edited 15 short, online videos in which Matthews explains the peace message in individual pieces of the center's art collection.

"Todd was able to capture each piece differently. It's even better than I could have imagined," says Matthews about the project, part of the center's 25th-year celebration. The videos can be viewed at www.bluffton.edu/lionlamb/art.

Other 25th-year events in the fall included open house receptions on Sept. 21, World Peace Day, and Oct. 1, Homecoming Saturday on campus. This spring, Jane Kurtz, an author of books for young people, will speak at Bluffton on April 3, and the university's Musselman Library will host a Lion and Lamb event on Saturday, May 5, during the annual May Day weekend celebration. Comprising the latter event will be a presentation—including the center's founder, Elizabeth "Libby" Hostetler—and a display in the library's Nord Room, where the Lion and Lamb began in 1987.

The center is a resource for students, teachers, parents and the campus and community. It houses a large selection of children's literature, curriculum guides and teacher resources, and art work focused on broad themes of peace and cultural understanding. More information is available online at www.bluffton.edu/lionlamb/.

"As we celebrate the Lion and Lamb's 25 years of promoting peace through programs and resources, we aim to provide opportunities for children as well as students and adults," Matthews said. "Peacemaking is relevant for all of us in our homes as well as in our local and global communities."

Bluffton's Troyer a published musician

Scott Troyer

During fall semester 2010, Scott Troyer was a Bluffton University sophomore who wrote arrangements of some of his favorite Christmas carols for his saxophone trio.

A year later, Troyer was a published musician—"very unusual" for an undergraduate his age, according to his composition teacher at Bluffton, Dr. Peter Terry.

Six of Troyer's Christmas arrangements were published last fall by BRS Music, the same company that has published band music by Terry, an associate professor of music.

"Ever since I started studying with Peter, I had thought about getting something published," says Troyer, who began writing music as a junior at Garaway High School in Sugarcreek, Ohio. But he didn't think about submitting the saxophone trio pieces initially, even though Dr. Adam Schattschneider, professor of music and Troyer's saxophone instructor, suggested that he try.

"I don't think I seriously considered it," Troyer says, "until Peter showed me the publishing company," which last March was seeking saxophone trio music for publication.

"When I saw that BRS was soliciting scores for this ensemble, I felt like he stood a pretty good chance," says Terry, recalling that "Scott's arrangements struck me as being publishable when I first heard them. They are well written and technically accessible for a mix of performers from high school through professional players, and are for an ensemble that is often overlooked."

Terry and Schattschneider were instrumental in preparation of the pieces, which were recorded in Bluffton's Yoder Recital Hall last April by the trio of Troyer, Schattschneider and Kitanya Murray, a senior from Findlay, Ohio. Jonathan Luginbill, a junior from Bluffton, served as engineer for the session, whose results bore fruit when Troyer received word that BRS would publish what the company called "highly marketable" music.

One factor in Troyer's success "was being able to rehearse and make adjustments to his arrangements as he worked on them," notes Schattschneider. "We spent several hours working on his trios before Christmas (2010), and at rehearsals we tried several different options. Several changes were made through this process and were incorporated into the published arrangements."

"The fact that Scott didn't get rejected on his first try is a major reflection on the quality of his work, and also on the positive value of treating your work as something deserving of respect," Terry says. "Scott pursued every aspect of this with professionalism. This was really a model of how to approach this career, and it paid off."

"It's encouraged me a lot," says Troyer about the experience, which may not have happened if not for a change of college plans before his graduation from Garaway. At the time, he had been accepted elsewhere, but financial aid was an issue. So he visited several other campuses, including Bluffton, and between aid from the university and his church—Walnut Creek, Ohio, Mennonite—"it came out to something we could afford to do," he says.

Now, "I don't think I would have been as happy anywhere else," he adds, crediting his professors, particularly Terry and Schattschneider.

"After coming to Bluffton, I learned more about what goes into a good piece of music," says Troyer, who is leaning toward a graduate program in either musicology or music theory after earning his Bluffton degree.

BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY

Bluffton students hear MEDA message

In November, 11 Bluffton University students heard the call for a Christian business response to global poverty at the annual Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) conference in Lancaster, Pa.

Technology, including social media, was also among the topics that resonated with the Bluffton students, who were among roughly 600 attendees, including many owners of small and medium-sized businesses.

Dr. George Lehman, the Howard Raid professor of business at Bluffton, said the conference addressed two major issues. "One was helping participants understand MEDA's program of economic development around the world, and the other was for providing resources for the participants in managing their business in a way that is consistent with Christian values," explained Lehman, who led the Bluffton contingent along with Dr. Jonathan Andreas, an assistant professor of economics.

Jake Moran, a Bluffton junior from Rushsylvania, Ohio, said the trip was meaningful. "The MEDA conference made me more confident about what I am doing with my education," Moran noted. "I really want to use my knowledge of business to help the less fortunate around the world."

Jonathan Cunningham, meanwhile, said he enjoyed learning about how technology is impacting the business world. "Some of my favorite seminars had to deal with the expansion of branchless banking and how social media and 'millennials' (people born from 1980-2000) are influencing the workplace," said Cunningham, a senior from Negley, Ohio.

Diedra Kandel, a senior from Dalton, Ohio, was challenged by the same "millennials" seminar, saying she realized that ability to use technology in business depends on individuals' strengths and weaknesses with technology, not their ages. "When it comes to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., the older generation is slowly adapting, and the younger generation can help," she said.

Peacemaking focus of UN seminar

Six Bluffton University students were among more than 30 students from Mennonite institutions who met in New York City in October for a conference focused on peacemaking in countries plagued by conflict.

"Constructing Nationhood: Civil Society, National Government, and the International Community" was the theme of the Mennonite Central Committee United Nations Office Seminar. The annual conference—attended by Bluffton students every year since it began 16 years ago—aims to raise awareness of important world issues.

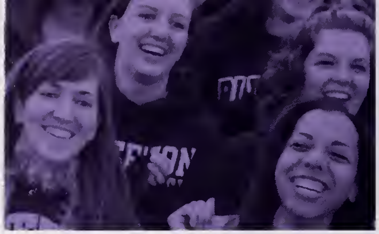
Participating students heard lectures and discussions on peacemaking and on various conflicts, including those between Israel and the Palestinians and between Sudan and newly independent South Sudan. "Our group considered the best way to move a country from failing state to a healthy, independent and sustainable country," said Shawn Yoder, a Bluffton senior from Plain City, Ohio.

The conference was held in the MCC U.N. office, across the street from U.N. headquarters. "We were able to look out the large windows directly behind the presenters and see the U.N. Secretariat building and flag line plaza," said Rudi Kauffman, an assistant professor of restorative justice at Bluffton who accompanied the students.

Faculty member Rudi Kauffman (third from right) went to the MCC U.N. conference with six students. They are (left to right) Windi Warren, Kayla Berkey, Jennifer Arnold, Johnny Erevia, Ahmad Rahat and Shawn Yoder. The U.N. building is in the background.

Kauffman added that he thought the conference was successful in opening the students to new ideas. "I believe the outcome among the students was a clarification of what a faithful response to God's call for peacemaking might look like," he said.

The experience left a lasting mark, Yoder said, noting that "it further ingrained the desire to be nonviolent into my belief system."



Health and Fitness Education Center going up

Bluffton is taking a major step toward enhanced facilities for both academics and athletics with the current construction of its new Health and Fitness Education Center.

"This is the next big development in Bluffton's ongoing commitment to deliver a total educational program of the highest quality," says President Dr. James M. Harder. "A Bluffton education includes excellent teaching and learning in the classroom and through a variety of co-curricular programs, including health and fitness for all students and competitive facilities for our NCAA student-athletes. This new building will meet the needs of Bluffton students for many years to come."

The 60,000-square-foot complex, located north of Marbeck Center on campus, will house space for the academic department of health, fitness and sport science; a weight and fitness center for all students; a new arena for intercollegiate basketball and volleyball; a sports medicine center; athletics offices; and practice, intramural and multipurpose facilities.

Expected to open in late 2012, the building is also expected to be the first on campus to be certified under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system. Among the key elements are commitments to an environmentally sustainable site, energy efficiency and recycling.

Funds for the $14 million project have been contributed by Bluffton alumni and friends as part of Extending Our Reach—The Campaign for Bluffton, through which the university has raised more than $30 million in cash and pledges to support academic programs, student scholarships, endowment and the building project.

A Health and Fitness Education Center was identified as the top priority for new facilities in the university's current master plan. Designed by nationally renowned architects Sasaki Associates of Boston, Mass., the center will replace 60-year-old Founders Hall as the home of Beavers basketball and volleyball.

The new arena will seat more than 1,500 and also include two practice courts and a walking/jogging track. The weight and fitness center, meanwhile, will be a 5,000-square-foot space for all students—with separate areas for aerobic fitness and free weights—and the sports medicine center will feature an exam room and offices for physicians and trainers; rehabilitation space, including a hydrotherapy room; and dedicated areas for treatment and taping. Another multipurpose space, with an elevated view of the arena, will be used for classes, meetings and special events.

To check construction progress via a live webcam, visit www.bluffton.edu/hfec/.

BLUFFTON
UNIVERSITY

Bluffton's mission...to prepare all students for life, vocation, responsible citizenship and ultimately for the purposes of God's universal kingdom.

Bluffton faculty, staff and students aspire to carry out this mission through discovery, community, respect and service – including service to the church.

A partner with:
Mennonite Education Agency
The education agency of Mennonite Church USA

of kid Robert was and to the fear such a wild, random shooting had stoked in the larger community. That attention extended to the trial and into the sentencing, where Riccardo came face to face with the child who had killed his child.

He said he immediately thought about the similarities between the young man and Robert. Each was someone's son or grandson. What had happened was the focus of great pain in each family. With the love and concern Robert had received, perhaps Robert's killer may have taken a different path in life.

When asked by the judge if he had anything he wanted to say, Riccardo made a choice.

Put yourself in his shoes. What would you do? How would you feel? What would you say?

Just last week, I heard a family ask a judge for a maximum sentence for the man who killed their loved one. I won't claim that I might not make that same request had such a tragedy struck my life.

But I know there's a God because that's the only way Riccardo could have stood there and did what he did that day. With tears in his eyes, he pled for leniency for the young man, a move inspired, he said, from a sudden and sincere outpouring of love and concern.

Since then, he has crisscrossed the country sharing his story of pain and forgiveness, encouraging young men tempted by gangs and the streets to take a different path.

I've seen him with them. The same boys who can't seem to sit still long enough for a teacher to tell them anything sit transfixed by his story.

And they aren't just listening. I've watched their faces. They are learning in the purest sense. They are taking in the story, injecting their own understanding, mixing in their own life experiences, processing it and then returning quickly to Riccardo's next word—all in the span of a moment. They aren't just receiving a story but are participant, active listeners. The first time I heard his presentation, I didn't just cry, I sobbed.

The great scholar and public intellectual Cornel West says truth cannot surface until suffering is allowed to speak. And suffering had spoken to Riccardo and to our family in such painful and vulnerable eloquence.

It spoke in Tucson, Ariz., where six people, including a 9-year-old girl died. It was tragic, certainly. But 30 to 40 people across America die every day to gun violence. And the country turns its back.

When will we choose different weapons?

Riccardo met Robert when Robert was a toddler and Riccardo began dating Robert's mother, Rosslyn. He lured Robert to him with a potato chip, and the baby made himself comfortable in Riccardo's lap. Before he left, Riccardo held the child out in front of him and smiled. Robert smiled back, grabbed his face with is chubby little hands and kissed Riccardo on the nose.

This was who Riccardo had rushed to the hospital to see. Shortly after his arrival, he and other family members were ushered into what the hospital ironically calls the Quiet Room, the place where doctors and police deliver to families the worst possible news. It is the place where the screaming begins—as it did that night.

> It is likely that we will all have choices of our own to make, moments when our suffering begins to speak and the truth of who we are begins to surface.

As the doctor emerged and with police department officials present, they explained to Riccardo and Rosslyn that their son had died but that they could not see him because his body was considered a crime scene.

The fact that they would not see their son until his funeral made the scene and his death seem that much more unreal.

Riccardo said his eyes swept the room, from the faces of his wife and mother-in-law, who were screaming, to the face of the doctor, the police officials, and then into his own trembling hands.

It is unlikely, God willing, that too many of us will experience exactly what Riccardo experienced. But it is likely that we will all have choices of our own to make, moments when our suffering begins to speak and the truth of who we are begins to surface.

We can choose, so we must choose our weapons wisely: brute force or, as Dr. King said, "soul force." Guns or grace. Hate or heart.

Riccardo chose after experiencing the unimaginable. And if he could do that, then the rest of us have no excuse.

Mark McCormick is director of communications at the Kansas Leadership Center. This is adapted from a speech he gave at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., on Jan. 17, 2011.

Anabaptist Teaching Centers

Carlos Romero is executive director of Mennonite Education Agency.

Terry Shue is director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA.

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.—Mennonite Church USA Vision Statement

Local communities—as named in our vision above—are the primary places where God is at work in our world. What does this mean for the work of growing leaders in the church—not only pastoral leaders but also other leaders needed for the church to fulfill its missional vocation? How can local congregations help develop leaders for the church of tomorrow?

The unique role of the local congregation should be embraced, validated, encouraged and supported by our educational institutions, pastoral training programs, area conferences and national conference.

Through careful study and discernment, as well as paying attention to where God's Spirit is already at work, God is calling us to develop a network of teaching centers across our land, for now called Anabaptist Teaching Centers (ATCs).

An ATC in Mennonite Church USA would be a congregation or hub of congregations with a vision and passion for shaping pastoral and lay leaders to strengthen the church. These centers would identify and call out budding leaders from within their faith communities and be open to helping train others God may lead to them. Each ATC would be unique; its congregations and pastors would have experience with and competence in certain practical ministry situations, and its participants would discern ways to share their experiences and God-given gifts as well as identify potential areas in which to grow. These centers would not be stand-alone entities but would network with other ATCs and be partners with our schools and conferences.

These are the desired outcomes of ATCs:

- people with leadership gifts will be called out, nurtured and trained in Anabaptist theology and practice in a local context of practice-based ministry;
- congregations and area conferences will create new levels of partnership with our educational institutions that reflect the emerging role of local congregations in leadership development;
- congregations will be energized as they build relationships and partnerships with people connected with the ATC who have developed particular missional leadership expertise;
- leaders at many levels and in many areas will grow to new heights, raising the capacity of the church to join God's mission locally and beyond.

ATCs would supplement and help focus our collective leadership development efforts while strengthening connections among congregations, area conferences, educational institutions, agencies and the national conference, aiming to further the best practices of both formal and informal leadership development. ATCs would help congregations with similar interests build ongoing relationships and be resources for other.

This is a big vision. But so is the vision that God has called the church to be used in. And leadership matters, especially in the church. Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. There are more than 40 such centers and more than 300 students active in Mennonite Church USA, thanks to the good work of Rafael Barahona, director for Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education at Mennonite Education Agency, and the Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (Anabaptist Biblical Institute), a leadership development program that has trained more than 1,000 students.

Also, congregations and area conferences are working with our seminaries to train leaders at a distance through programs such as Journey, Study and Training for Effective Pastoral Ministry, Pastoral Studies Distance Education and the Preaching Institute. Our colleges, universities and seminaries are committed to strengthening the church through leadership development programs that respond to local needs and increase access through the use of technology and other means.

When you consider your congregation, which gifts and experiences has God given you that others could learn from as they encounter similar ministry situations in their own contexts? We also encourage you to reflect on leaders who have been called from within your congregation. How and why did this come about? Do you have specific programs that led to leaders being called? We affirm and celebrate the leadership development that has already taken place among us. May our Anabaptist Teaching Centers continue to build on this foundation in helping grow the next generation of leaders. TM

For more information about ATCs, contact Terry at terrys@mennoniteusa.org or 574-523-3095 and Carlos at carlosr@mennoniteeducation.org or 574-642-3164, ext. 10.

Servant leaders or Christian executives?

Some of us remember when bishops were in charge and pretty much ruled Mennonite Church life. I remember going to the annual meeting of the conference to discover that the bishops had already met and made decisions on the live issues facing congregations. Those decisions were then reported to the ministers and congregations for implementation.

Was that kind of power and process what the situation demanded? It gradually lost its favor with the people as lay delegates and congregational representation came into vogue. What some called "heavy-handed" was replaced with a more open and democratic process.

When I was in college and seminary, the emphasis was on servant leadership. One's authority and mandate for leadership was derived and earned by serving the Lord and his people. Humility was a virtue. Space to lead was earned rather than granted. The focus was on those being served rather than on the server.

I have had a growing concern about the change in our view of church leadership over the past several decades. Have we replaced the concept and practice of servant leadership with something borrowed from the secular world, even big business? Have we succumbed to the influence of the zeitgeist and the larger world's emphasis on individualism and self-interest?

What are the indicators? Our literature, curricula and periodicals and the language and titles we use seem to avoid servant themes. And I acknowledge that women and people from oppressed situations may not welcome another call to servitude. They may be sick of it. Nevertheless, I am not ready to allow self-interest and individualism to smother a biblical practice.

In Luke's account of the Last Supper (Luke 22:25-27), Jesus addresses a dispute among his disciples. "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

A related concern is the change in the names we use to describe leadership in the church. From the simple titles of "Brother" and "Sister" of the 1940s and 1950s we have moved to "Doctor," "Executive" and CEO (chief executive officer), which seems like quite a leap for a people once known for simplicity and humility.

Have I overstated the case? You may want to check out the websites of our denominational and area conference offices for staff titles.

There surely are settings where listing and even citing the education and accomplishments of staff is appropriate and helpful. But there are times when the use of titles may amount to the stroking of pride and an exchange of favor.

Is this what we want? Is this what the Lord of the church wants? Do we want our church leaders to be seen as servants or as powerful people adept at shuffling the decks?

If we believe in servant leadership, we need to use appropriate titles that reflect and are consonant with belief and practice.

An example: Chief Executive Officer or CEO is a common term in the business world. Chief refers to the tribal leader, boss, one in charge. Executive is the person who decides and implements. Officer occupies the office most commonly used in military or law enforcement settings.

Would we say that Brother Menno Simons, (that crippled, underground, hunted, hedge preacher) was our CEO—our number one office holder who made and implemented decisions for 16th-century Anabaptists? Probably not.

Jesus said, "But you are not to be called Rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:8-12).

I have always winced when someone calls me Reverend. It doesn't feel good and doesn't fit a simple Anabaptist. I have learned to accept the term Pastor, but Minister is surely adequate.

Beyond mere personal preferences is the bigger issue of how we perceive church leadership and how we are perceived by others.

Jesus gave us clear teaching and a concrete example of servant leadership. In a world saturated with individualism and self-interest, we are wise to follow the Lord's teaching and example. TM

Robert Hartzler is a retired Mennonite pastor and conference minister and a member of Sugar Creek Mennonite Church in Wayland, Iowa.

Have we replaced the practice of servant leadership with something borrowed from the secular world?

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Mennonites join Occupy movements

Chapters of Occupy Wall Street carry specific goals for local contexts.

NO CUTS
NO CUTS

SEIU worker

On Nov. 7, 2011, more than 600 individuals joined the No Cuts march and rally in Chicago organized by Kara Bender of Reba Place Mennonite Church.

Mennonites all over the country have joined Occupy Wall Street (OWS) through their local Occupy groups. From small cities like Lancaster, Pa., to the headquarter of the movement in New York City to faraway Albuquerque, N.M., the movements carry unique goals specific to its context and population.

Occupy Wall Street: Sandra Perez, of Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship, spent time in Zuccotti Park and continues to follow the movement. She says a group from her church found ways to support OWS—through standing in solidarity at the gatherings and donating money to the movement.

One individual set up a charging station at Zuccotti Park to power laptops and cell phones through a self-contained solar system using a milk crate, a solar panel, a battery and an inverter.

Barbara Render, 43, of Brooklyn, N.Y., attended the interfaith service at Zuccotti Park on Nov. 20, 2011, the same day as OWS's Intergenerational Day. She also attends Manhattan Mennonite.

"I thought the speakers were very diverse and enthusiastic about getting the 1 percent to pay their share and stop burdening the 99 percent," she says. "I saw a good number of minorities represented. I hope that all people of different races will come out and disrupt Wall Street in any nonviolent means that it can, such as protesting."

I saw a good number of minorities represented.
—Barbara Render

Matt Dean, a student at Union Theological Seminary, joined "Protest Chaplains NYC"—a group of chaplains serving the community of protesters. He says he is committed to individuals who are "victims of violence, whether that violence be economic, police brutality or forced cultural estrangement—in the cases of the homeless and mentally ill."

Julia Danner, 20, participated in a march on the Brooklyn Bridge last October that resulted in an unplanned arrest. Danner is the daughter of Michael Danner, pastor of Metamora (Ill.) Mennonite Church. Danner, of Stony Point, N.Y., is affiliated with Metamora Mennonite Church.

"While I would have gladly, and likely would still, choose to be arrested for the cause, at that point in time, the arrests that were made were made as a result of the NYPD's trapping us on the bridge," she says. She stood in handcuffs for over three hours and then was put in prison until 2:30 a.m., but charges were not pressed.

The second event Danner participated in was a disruption of an event held by Birthright Alumni, a Jewish organization that provides educational trips to Israel for Jewish young adults.

Danner is Jewish and feels called to speak to her own religious community, "specifically in relation to the Palestinians who have been and continue to be victimized by the Israeli Occupation and Birthright's role in the perpetuation of anti-Palestinian propaganda," she says.

Occupy Chicago: Kara Bender organized an action in Chicago on Nov. 7, 2011, through her work as a community organizer with the Jane Addams Senior Caucus, an organization of older adults working for social change.

Bender attends Reba Place Church in Chicago and is a member of the Reba Place Fellowship Community.

The action, which Occupy Chicago joined, called on public officials not to cut funding to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Protesters also intended to bring awareness that funding cuts would disproportionately affect low-income women and seniors of color, Bender says.

The action included a 600-person rally and short march to downtown Chicago, where they met up with 48 others who participated in civil disobedience by stopping traffic. Twenty members from Reba Place Church attended, and six, including Bender, were arrested and ticketed but not jailed.

Leading up to the action and arrest, Bender led

Photo provided

Julia Danner (far right) at a workshop about the BDS movement in New York City. BDS is campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel with hopes to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

civil disobedience trainings and informational sessions at Reba Place Church, part of a six-week series on peace work.

Tim Nafziger and Charletta Erb of Living Water Community Church have also been involved. Nafziger has helped start up Occupy Rogers Park, which had plans to meet at Living Water on Dec. 17, 2011, as the church hosted the other Occupy groups from the Chicago area.

Occupy Pittsburgh: Inspired by a Sunday school class on discipleship, Marilyn Bender wondered if anyone involved in Occupy Pittsburgh identified with Jesus' teachings on possessions, greed and generosity. She decided she would go downtown to hear the thoughts of those gathered at the camp.

On Nov. 20, 2011, Scott Hoffman and Phoebe Sharp, also of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church, joined her and brought sub sandwiches to share. The man that led them around the camp was a Christian.

He told them "there were many different faiths represented in the camp and they try to be respectful and learn from each other," Bender says.

We … have to find ways to encourage people to act in ways that reflect the movement at large.—Nick Martin of Occupy Lancaster

Around 50 individuals were gathered at the camp, and a number are veterans. The veterans shared their feelings of frustration at the "illegal wars" and the economy, Sharp says. "I was struck by the visual juxtaposition: the tents of the camp are literally dwarfed by the tall buildings, such as U.S. Steel Tower and the UPMC building," Sharp says. However, the guide said that some of the responses from downtown workers have been positive. In fact, a few workers from the banks and other businesses have joined the protesters for lunch.

Occupy Lancaster: Nick Martin, 22, says Occupy Lancaster's main goals include encouraging individuals to support small businesses and shop locally for the holidays.

"We don't have a huge movement of thousands of people that will turn out for rallies, so we have to find ways to encourage people to act in ways that reflect the movement at large," he says.

Martin organizes Occupy Lancaster events and leads the media and publicity work for the movement. Martin's church, Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, has opened its space for several Occupy events, including general assemblies, town hall meetings, trainings, a press conference and more. (A general assembly functions as the governing body of OWS.)

Martin says he feels supported from Mennonites and other faith groups in Lancaster and thinks that is something special. "In a lot of places people are afraid to ask Christians to come out and support an event," he says.

However, some individuals feel challenged in knowing how to get involved. Even if someone does not attend a general assembly or a rally, they still may donate food for the camp or offer their space for an event or forward an e-mail, he says.

Occupy Albuquerque: Andy Gingerich, 28, says the movement in Albuquerque works to address issues unique to New Mexico. For example, the movement is now referred to as "(Un)occupy Albuquerque" due to the reactions from a number of New Mexico's indigenous individuals who said the term "occupy" carries negative connotations, as their communities were occupied by the U.S. government for many years.

Gingerich, along with several other members of Albuquerque Mennonite Church, participated in some of the movement's events. Some individuals marched in the city's Day of the Dead event to connect with Hispanic families. Others rode the city buses to hear concerns from poor and underemployed individuals. Home foreclosures offer a pressing issue in Albuquerque, as many foreclosures occur in the lower income areas of the city, he says.

While the action and events slowed down this past month, a group continues to meet regularly and stay connected online.

"[OWS] is action-oriented, where you go out and demonstrate, … but more than that it involves organizing," he says. "It is people that are just finding a new way to connect with each other. There is a lot of power in getting together and naming the problem."—*Anna Groff*

Harts honored for five decades of ministry

Betty and Lawrence Hart longtime champions of Native concerns

Photo provided

From left: Steve Heinrich, director of Native Ministry of Canada; Edith vonGunten; Barb Daniels; Betty and Lawrence Hart; Neill vonGunten and Henry Neufeld at the ceremony

Members of Native Mennonite Ministries and Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministries honored Betty and Lawrence Hart, two longtime champions of Native concerns who have spent their adult lives ministering to the Arapahoe and Cheyenne people in Oklahoma, in October 2011 at the Native Mennonite Ministries Council meeting in Clinton, Okla.

The Harts were presented with a handmade pointing stick and a hand drum painted with a turtle, an animal that in the Cheyenne tradition represents patience and longevity—two qualities the Harts have embodied throughout their lives of service.

Lawrence has been pastor of Koinonia Mennonite Church just outside Clinton for 48 years. The Harts also built the Cheyenne Cultural Center, an interpretive center that gives visitors a glimpse into the history, struggles and present-day lives of the Cheyenne people. It also houses the Cheyenne Language Institute.

The Harts have spearheaded an effort called Return to the Earth to identify and properly bury the remains of 25,000 Native Americans. The remains are currently housed in various museums around the country.

Lawrence, 78, and Betty, 77, met at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., before Lawrence left to join the Marines. He was called out of military service to be a peace chief for his tribe, the Cheyenne. Today he is one of the four principal peace chiefs—a fitting role for a Native Mennonite, Hart said.

"The Cheyenne, in particular the tribe that I belong to, have a longstanding peace tradition through peace chiefs who live a life of peace no matter what the costs," he said by telephone from his home. He said that even if a man's "own son is killed right in front of his own teepee," he is forbidden from taking revenge.

"That resonates well with Anabaptist tradition, and so we're really pleased to be a part of that tradition as well," he said.

Willis Busenitz, a pastor at White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church in Busby, Mont., first met Lawrence when Busenitz began pastoring Hart's home church, Bethel Mennonite Church, in Hammon, Okla. Lawrence's father, Homer, was a lay pastor there.

"As fellow pastors of Cheyenne Mennonite churches in Oklahoma, we began a long and special relationship with Lawrence and Betty," Busenitz says. "In many ways, Lawrence was a mentor to me and helped me in understanding the Cheyenne way of life."

"Lawrence has a deep respect for the Cheyenne way of life as well as for the Mennonite church," Busenitz says. "He has brought these two together in special ways."

Lawrence said that he has appreciated Native Mennonite Ministries' contribution to the broader Mennonite church in amplifying the voices of Native congregations.

"It's really important that we recognize that we, too, are Anabaptists, and that we as Native Americans have an opportunity to make a contribution to the overall Mennonite church and are really pleased to do that," he said.

The council also read a letter from Mennonite Mission Network CEO and executive director Stanley Green, who praised the Harts for their four decades of ministry.

"Chief Lawrence Hart's story is powerful and inspirational," Green said. "This life is sacred work."—*Mennonite Mission Network staff*

Photo provided

Betty and Lawrence Hart

Optimism after Korea Anabaptist Center split

Center and Connexus move to offices in different cities to cut costs.

Separation does not always mean subtraction. In fact, for the Korea Anabaptist Center in South Korea, dividing from Connexus, the English-language institute that it added in 2004, is actually being viewed as a multiplication for both. To cut expenses, both moved from the headquarters in Seoul to separate offices in different cities. KAC is now in ChunCheon City, northeast of Seoul, and Connexus is in De-okSo, a suburb of Seoul.

"It's mainly due to the financial crisis that had many complicated causes," says Kyong-Jung Kim, KAC's director. "It was too much for us to remain in the city of Seoul's downtown area."

KAC's staff consists of Kyong-Jung and Erv and Marian Wiens, who are volunteer workers on behalf of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Mission Network. Connexus reduced its staff from five to two teachers.

Kyong-Jung also says he sees the change as more like children growing up and leaving their home, rather than a divorce.

"The parents respect what their children are doing, and children still honor their parents," Kyong-Jung says. "Even though they (Connexus) have their own entity and own finances and programs, still we see a big KAC family."

In August 2011, a few months shy of KAC's 10th anniversary on Nov. 5, leaders decided to separate KAC and Connexus. KAC is a resource center on Anabaptist teachings for individuals and churches. It was established in 2001, after Korean leaders of Jesus Village Church invited Mennonite workers from Canada to share Anabaptist theology and practice.

As KAC's library developed, the idea to create an English-language institute arose, in part, as a way to generate funding for KAC. Connexus is an educational community "emphasizing cross-cultural understanding through communication and exchange."

We are sort of waiting to see what God is doing.
—Marian Wiens

Young people—many of whom were alumni from Mennonite colleges and universities—were recruited to teach English, creating a bond among Koreans, Canadians and Americans. But as other English institutes formed in Seoul, revenue and enrollment at Connexus declined.

Throughout Korea, the desire for Anabaptist understanding of faith is great among Koreans who reject the religion of prosperity and materialism emphasized in the megachurches of the country, the Wienses say.

KAC has increased understanding of Anabaptism in South Korea, which just a few decades ago, was considered heresy, Kyong-Jung says.

Photo provided

Ervin Wiens and Kyong-Jung Kim (foreground) renovate the new Korea Anabaptist Center offices.

"Peace, even though it is a very essential concept, many Korean Christians see it as an absence of war, no physical fighting, or it's calmness within yourself, or peace with God," Kyong-Jung says. "Korean Christians don't have the same understanding for what Anabaptists see as shalom, a way of living with humanity and with creation. Sometimes churches don't want to talk about it because it brings in politics."

Jesus Village Church and Grace and Peace Mennonite Church are the two officially Anabaptist congregations in South Korea, with about 130 members (including children) between them. Many individuals at other churches identify with Anabaptism, though. KAC will work more directly with congregations, while Connexus will continue to focus on English training.

KAC has a new locally run board and revived ties with Jesus Village Church—close to KAC. The church has provided financial support, helped with office renovations and spiritual support through intercessory prayer as well.

The Wienses say they are assured and excited, not only about the future of KAC and Connexus but for themselves. They plan to return to Canada in the spring, when their assignment ends, and are looking forward to spending more time with their six grown children and seven grandchildren.

"We are sort of waiting to see what God is doing," says Marian Wiens, a retired family therapist who helped the KAC and Connexus staffs work through the emotional split."—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

Top 10 Mennonite Church USA news stories in 2011

1. Goshen professor Jim Miller murdered

As the result of a home invasion robbery, Goshen (Ind.) College professor James Miller and his wife, Linda, were attacked early on Oct. 9. Jim died at the scene, and Linda was wounded but is now recovered. Miller was a professor of biology at Goshen College for 31 years. He was described as a gentle, humble man who cared for his students and employed humor in the classroom to lighten the material. On Oct. 14, the Goshen Police Department held a press conference to announce that they were still analyzing evidence and interviewing witnesses and people of interest but had no suspect in the murder. (*November*)

2. EMU alumna wins Nobel Peace Prize

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., alumna Leymah Gbowee was one of three women jointly awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced on Oct 7. She shared the prize with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and women's rights activist Tawakkul Karman of Yemen. Gbowee, who earned a master's degree in conflict transformation at EMU, received the Nobel Prize for her work in organizing a peace movement to end the Second Liberian Civil War. She has become famous across the globe for mobilizing women. Only 11 other women have won the peace prize in its 110-year history. Gbowee graduated from EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in 2007 with a master of arts degree. She attended CJP's Summer Peacebuilding Institute in 2004 and completed its Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) program in 2005. (*November*)

Jon Styer

EMU alumna Leymah Gbowee was one of three women jointly awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

3. MWC leadership change

For the first time, a leader from the global South will become the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference. On May 4, the MWC Executive Committee formally appointed César García of Bogotá, Colombia, as general secretary-elect, to succeed Larry Miller on Jan. 1. García, who was chair of the Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas de Colombia (Mennonite Brethren Churches of Colombia) from 2002 to 2008, is completing master's studies at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif. Also included in the Executive Committee action was the plan to move the location of the MWC head office from Strasbourg, France, to Bogotá. (*June, October*)

4. Goshen anthem decision reversed

In 2010, Goshen (Ind.) College President James Brenneman announced that an instrumental version of the national anthem was to be played before select sports events. On June 4, the board of directors reversed its 2010 decision to play the national anthem before athletic events. At that time, the board also asked Brenneman to find an alternative to the national anthem that "fits with sports tradition, that honors country and that resonates with Goshen College's core values and respects the view of diverse constituencies." Brenneman selected "America the Beautiful." (*July*)

5. MennoMedia forms

Mennonite Publishing Network and Third Way Media merged to form a new agency, "MennoMedia," on July 1. That was the decision of the board that governed MPN and now governs the new integrated agency.

MPN was the publishing agency of both Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Third Way Media was a program with Mennonite Mission Network and had programming and operations in Canada from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s. As a merged entity, MennoMedia is binational. Over 100 years of publishing in Scottdale, Pa., came to an end last summer, when MPN merged with Third Way Media. Some of the staff in Scottdale moved to Harrisonburg, Va., where the main offices of MennoMedia are located. (*May*)

6. Spaulding dismissed from worship council; Covenant leaves Southeast Conference

Mennonite Church USA leaders dismissed Randall Spaulding from his position on the binational worship council on March 8. Spaulding was appointed to the council by Mennonite Church USA in 2009. Spaulding is pastor of Covenant Mennonite Church in Sarasota, Fla. On Nov. 15, Covenant Mennonite Fellowship's request to leave the conference was formalized.

According to Terry Shue, director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA, the final decision made by MC USA leaders is an attempt to align with MC USA's position on sexuality as well as support Southeast Mennonite Conference's September 2009 decision to revoke Spaulding's ministerial credentials.

Spaulding has served as pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship since 2003. The SMC leadership board cited Spaulding's disclosure of his desire to pursue a covenanted same-sex relationship as the reason. *(April, December)*

7. Pastor not disciplined for officiating same-sex marriage

Western District Conference delegates on July 30 turned away a challenge to a decision not to discipline a pastor for officiating at a same-sex covenant ceremony.

By a 152-to-22 vote, delegates upheld the moderator's ruling that a motion to overturn the decision was out of order. Michael Entz of Hydro, Okla., moved that the Executive Committee overrule the Leadership Commission and discipline Joanna Harader, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan.

In September 2010, Harader performed a covenant ceremony for two women who are not part of the congregation.

Mennonite Church USA's 2001 membership guidelines forbid pastors to lead same-sex ceremonies. The guidelines require a conference to review the credentials of a pastor who breaks the rule. The WDC Leadership Commission conducted a review and on a 4-to-2 vote found Harader's credentials "in order." *(June, September)*

Merle Good

At the 2011 Executive Committee meetings in Taiwan, Cisca Mawangu Ibanda of Congo presented carved animals to César García (right) and Larry Miller. The animals represent qualities important for their service to MWC. Miller holds his elephant with its trunk down "in a peaceful position." García, she explained, holds a giraffe with its neck fully extended so that he can see "the landscape of the future."

8. Executive Board, agencies face funding troubles

Reports from the fiscal year ending Jan. 31, 2011, show that overall, Mennonite Church USA's various agencies and entities are cutting expenses in response to economic challenges. Contributions from individuals and churches continue to decrease. In September, Jim Beitler, Mennonite Church USA Executive Board member, said the Executive Board is in a "deficit spending mode," which is affecting its reserves. EB staff is working at austerity measures and have cut expenses in several ways. *(May, September, October)*

9. Mennonite leaders die

Five Mennonite leaders died in 2011:

Ross T. Bender, 81, was dean emeritus at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

Heinz Janzen, 83, served as general secretary of the General Conference Mennonite Church during the 1970s.

Gordon Kaufman, 86, was a well-known theologian and an emeritus professor at Harvard Divinity School.

Paul M. Schrock, 75, was a longtime editor at Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa.

Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 73, served as writer, editor and pastor. *(various issues)*

10. No resolutions at Pittsburgh

During Pittsburgh 2011, the delegates tried the "Pittsburgh Experiment," a proposal from Mennonite Church USA leaders. The experiment did away with resolutions for that assembly. Moderator Ed Diller explained that the Executive Board "thought [the Pittsburgh Experiment] gives more authority to the delegate assembly rather than less."

Although the delegates wanted to take time to hear as many voices as possible—and voted down an early motion to cease debate—only about 30 of the 800-some delegates voted against the Pittsburgh Experiment. *(August)—compiled by Anna Groff*

Miller at MWC's helm for 22 years

Mennonite World Conference general secretary leaves role on Jan. 1.

Eleanor Miller

Larry Miller's tenure as General Secretary was marked by his gift of encouragement among other global leaders. Here, in 1991, he stands behind his "big brothers"—Mesach Krisetya (left) of Indonesia, who was to become MWC president in 1997, and Reg Toews of Canada, then serving as treasurer.

Larry Miller was under consideration for a graduate-level teaching position in New Testament in the Protestant faculty at the University of Strasbourg. But something unexpected had come his way. The European Mennonite churches had together nominated him to be executive secretary of Mennonite World Conference.

Miller became executive secretary during the closing event of the MWC assembly in 1990 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The setting, the music, the ceremony had a touch of the spectacular, but Miller and the organization faced a frightening deficit as the weeklong meeting ended.

Today, Miller says, "while MWC needed to deal with that reality, and we were able to, I never felt pressure to 'succeed' by building a large institution. Instead, the focus was on helping this little boat—MWC—catch the wind in its sails."

Last May, the MWC Executive Committee appointed César García of Bogotá, Colombia, as general secretary-elect, to succeed Larry Miller on Jan. 1.

In January 1997, the first Mennonite World Conference assembly under Larry Miller's leadership took place in central Kolkata, inside tents on a sprawling school campus. The daring move stood in stark contrast to the just-prior assembly, which had been held in a well-appointed convention center in Winnipeg.

"We had potential disasters everywhere," Miller says. However, the bold decision and the stark contrast to past gatherings cleared a path for new aspects to be born as part of the assembly program. For the first time there was a Global Church Village, a venue where delegates learned about the life of churches in each continental region through food and cultural displays, and Assembly Gathered/Assembly Scattered. In fact, these elements worked so well that they have continued in subsequent MWC assemblies.

Perhaps one of Larry Miller's greatest gifts to Mennonites and Brethren in Christ around the world has been his belief, and consequent actions, that the church is never just the local congregation or the denomination or the world body.

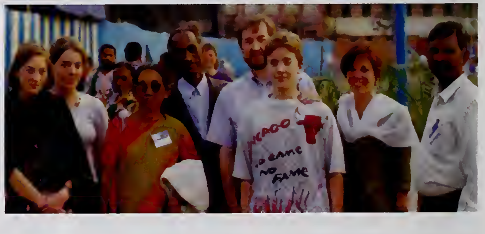
"The church is both local and global," he says. "It always has been and will always be."

He helped conceive of, then create, the Global Church Sharing Fund. (MWC member churches in the South apply for and receive funds for their ministries, as an expression of Jubilee redistribution.)

He guided the development of MWC's statement of "Shared Convictions," brief paragraphs documenting the core beliefs that the scattered Anabaptist churches and fellowships claim.

"We are in a historic transition moment," says Miller. "There is decline in the churches of the North. But when you belong to a global body of faith, there's always a part that's experiencing new life and a vision that can draw all of us forward."

"With gratitude and joy, I imagine César García and those with him picking up the vision for the future," he says. "I look forward to seeing how they incarnate it. My experience of working with César has been among my top joys, among my very best MWC experiences."—*Phyllis Pellman Good for Mennonite World Conference*



The Millers and their children (now married) in Kolkata in 1997, with the parents-in-law of Indian church leader Menno Joel (right). Left to right: Anne-Marie Miller Blaise; Elisabeth Miller Sommers; Menno's parents-in-law, Larry, Alexandre Miller, Eleanor, and Menno.

EMM president gives inaugural address

Eastern Mennonite Missions welcomes its seventh president, Nelson Okanya.

Tammy Evans

EMM president Nelson Okanya (center) and his wife, Jessica (left), greet Mahlon Hess, former EMM missionary to Tanzania.

I believe the Christian story is matchless in terms of its hope and life transformation," said Nelson Okanya, Eastern Mennonite Missions President in his inaugural address. The seventh president of EMM, Okanya spoke at the Annual Vision Banquet on Nov. 18, 2011, in Lancaster, Pa.

"We are charged with the responsibility to tell a better story than Apple products or Google can tell," he said. "These are exciting times to be alive."

Nearly 700 people attended the seventh annual banquet with the theme of "Still Going: A Rich History, a Promising Future."

Joe Sherer, chairman of the EMM Board, commissioned Okanya, saying he was called of God and uniquely qualified to be EMM's new president.

"Nelson was born in a rural Kenyan village, where, like King David, he was literally a shepherd," Sherer said. "In one of those coincidences that happen when God is involved in our lives, Nelson's father, John, met EMM missionaries David and Grace Shenk. To make a long story short, John and his family moved to Nairobi and became involved in the Mennonite church." The Okanyas were founding members of the Mathare Mennonite Church, and today John Okanya pastors the Ore Mennonite Church in Migori, Kenya.

Okanya, who began his address with an East African greeting of "Praise the Lord," said he was "humbled by God's call and the affirmation of that call by the church at different stages of my life."

Okanya said he is grateful for his parents, who nurtured him in the ways of the Lord. They lived in ways that clearly demonstrated to him that they took their faith seriously and that their faith mattered in their daily living.

"We are on the cusp of a new era. The ways of the past no longer effectively work, and the future is yet to be shaped and defined," Okanya said. "It is exciting because we are free to innovate, to think outside the box and experiment with new ways of doing church and missions. I believe the gospel is the greatest story ever told, and I am excited to explore relevant ways to tell it with passion and conviction in partnership with local congregations."

Okanya said: "In the same way the foghorn sounded as pioneer missionaries left in the 1930s, tonight signals the beginning of a renewed mission vision, passion and partnership. Let us go forth and tell this good news and embody it for our families, our neighbors and for all the people around the world." A quilted wall hanging was given to Okanya by the EMM board. EMM board member Doris Nolt presented it to Okanya, pointing out that the pattern "Trip Around the World" was chosen intentionally as a reminder of EMM's focus in taking the gospel around the world, including here at home and wherever the church is not … yet.—*Linda Moffett Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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Everence gets first rebuke

Health and Human Services says insurance premium increase is too high.

A 2010 law that is part of sweeping national health-care legislation allows the U.S. Health and Human Service (HHS) department to require an explanation from insurance companies when they increase health insurance premiums more than 10 percent.

On Nov. 21, 2011, Everence, based in Goshen, Ind., became the first insurance company to be challenged by HHS through the new law. The dispute centered around something called a "loss ratio" and whether a sufficient percentage of the premiums Everence collected were spent on health-care expenses. At least 80 percent of the premiums collected must be spent on health-care costs.

In its review, HHS stated the rate increase for the company's ShareNet employer groups in Pennsylvania was "unreasonable" because it projected the plan's loss ratio to be below the federal standard of 80 percent. The loss ratio calculated by HHS was based on a one-year experience period.

"Everence's 12 percent rate increase for small businesses in Pennsylvania was excessive," HHS said on Nov. 21, 2011. "After reviewing the rate, independent experts determined the choice of assumptions the company based its rate increase on reflected national data rather than reliable and available state data. These assumptions resulted in an unreasonably high premium in relation to the benefits provided."

On Nov. 22, Everence responded to the HHS rebuke. "Everence ... calculated its ShareNet rates in Pennsylvania based on a two-year experience period that results in a projected loss ratio that is comfortably above the federal standard," Everence said in a news release.

The loss ratio history for the Everence plan in Pennsylvania has been 81.6 percent over the two-year experience period used for rating, which is approximately equivalent to the national loss ratio of the Everence ShareNet plan, said the release.

"Essentially, our national experience and Pennsylvania state experience are the same for the two-year experience period," said Dave Gautsche, Everence senior vice president of products and services. "The Everence experience indicates that a longer experience period reduces premium volatility, which works better for group clients. We'd welcome the opportunity to have a conversation with HHS officials about how we determine our rates."

The federal law does not require a change in the rate increase based on the HHS statement.

Everence implemented the health insurance rate change effective Oct. 1, 2011. The ShareNet premiums in Pennsylvania will have an average rate increase of 12.6 percent for groups renewing their plans Oct. 1 and gradually moves down to an average rate increase of 11 percent by July 1. The rate increase allows the company to cover the increasing cost of medical services for its members, Everence said.

HHS posted Everence's statement on its website. But as of Dec. 15, 2011, HHS had not requested any changes be made to the statement, Everence leaders said.—*Everett J. Thomas*

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Geyer's employment terminated

Lancaster Mennonite School's assistant principal accused of misconduct.

Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School (LMS) assistant principal Steve Geyer was placed on administrative leave and barred from all contact with students on Nov. 4, 2011, after school officials received allegations that students were sexually abused by Geyer. On Nov. 17, 2011, Geyer's employment was terminated. The termination was announced to LMS constituents through a Nov. 21, 2011, release from superintendent J. Richard Thomas.

"We will continue to cooperate with any ongoing investigation by authorities," the release said. "As a result of our internal review, we have terminated Steve Geyer's employment and affiliation with LMS effective Nov. 17, 2011. He has been barred from the campus and from having contact with LMS students. We continue to urge anyone with additional relevant information to contact the authorities.

"We also are focusing on doing everything we can to ensure that all our students feel safe physically, spiritually and emotionally. Professional counseling is being provided for some students, and our school counselors are developing ongoing plans to help all students. Please continue to pray for all of us, particularly those students most affected by this situation."

According to a Nov. 9, 2011, news report in *Lancaster Online*, Geyer and his wife, Charlotte, hosted South Korean students in their home, as many as four at one time. *Lancaster Online* is an edition of the *Lancaster New Era*, *Intelligencer Journal* and *Sunday News* newspapers.

> We … are focusing on doing everything we can to ensure that all our students feel safe physically, spiritually and emotionally.
> —J. Richard Thomas

LMS superintendent J. Richard Thomas first alerted parents and caregivers about the situation in a Nov. 9, 2011, e-mail.

Lancaster Mennonite School has four campuses. Geyer was the assistant principal at the Lancaster campus. Neither the Nov. 9 or Nov. 21, 2011, releases reported that Geyer was charged with any crime.—*Everett J. Thomas*

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Once again, households that subscribe to *The Mennonite* were generous in 2011. From Dec. 16, 2010, through Dec. 15, 2011, total contributions were $81,180 from 993 households. This compares with the year earlier total of $77,065, a 4.7 percent increase.

"We are so grateful for this support," says Everett J. Thomas, editor of *The Mennonite*. "We could not survive without it. Although the recession of 2008 may be ending, many of our advertisers are still unable to advertise at earlier levels. That significantly impacted our advertising revenue. Contributions from readers filled the shortfall."

While advertising in the print magazine remains flat, advertising in the e-zines *TMail* and *Meno Acontecer* and on the magazine's website increases slowly.

The Mennonite receives no subsidies through Mennonite Church USA offering-plate channels. However, Executive Board staff are considering a change to the distribution formula and may include *The Mennonite* in the future. Subscriptions, advertising and contributions are currently the primary sources of income.

The list below does not include 234 individuals or households that elected to remain anonymous.

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'Conflict minerals' needed for cell phones

Everence, Praxis launch campaign to pressure cell phone companies.

Praxis Mutual Funds and Everence are calling on electronics producers and retailers to pursue ways to end the conflict minerals industry. Praxis Mutual Funds are advised by Everence Capital Management.

And now shareholders and other individuals can make their voices heard through an e-mail campaign launched by Praxis Mutual Funds.

"Children and adults are forced—through rape and brute force—to work in mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo," says Mark Regier, director of stewardship investing for Everence and Praxis Mutual Funds. "The reason for the violence is, sadly, to extract minerals such as tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold, which are essential in the manufacturing of our most common electronic devices, such as cell phones."

In accordance with the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, electronics manufacturers in the United States will be required to trace and disclose their possible exposure to conflict minerals.

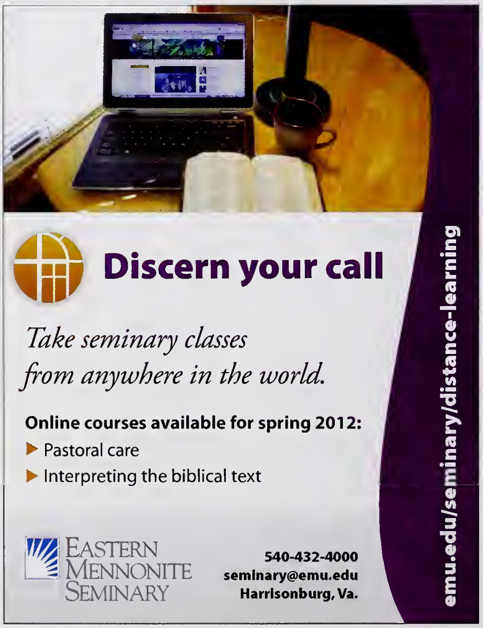
Some of the largest companies are pushing back on the new legislation, claiming that tracing mineral sources is nearly impossible due to complicated and entangled global supply chains.

In an effort to encourage electronics manufacturers to understand the magnitude of the issue, Praxis and Everence hope to garner support for conflict-free devices among cellular service providers.

Shareholders and other individuals can send e-mail messages to their cell phone providers asking for conflict-free phones, via an online e-mail submission form available at www.praxismutualfunds.com.

"We've launched this e-mail campaign as a way to give individuals a voice," says Regier. "If cell phone companies know their consumers want conflict-free phones, we hope they will help us convince electronics companies to take steps to ensure they are not purchasing conflict minerals."

In addition to the conflict minerals e-mail campaign, Praxis and Everence are in conversation with electronics companies regarding conflict minerals and how the passage of the Dodd-Frank Act can help companies find new ways to do business while also caring for our global neighbors.
—*Everence*



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EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
LANDS of the BIBLE: JORDAN and ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR TYLER HARTFORD (July 19-28)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 23-September 3)
TOUR to LITHUANIA (in partnership with LCC International University) (September 12-19)
MENNONITE STORY in POLAND and UKRAINE (September 18-29)
SCENIC AUTUMN CRUISE: CANADA and NEW ENGLAND (October 6-16)
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MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
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GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
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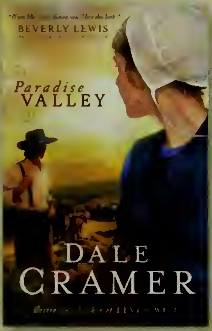
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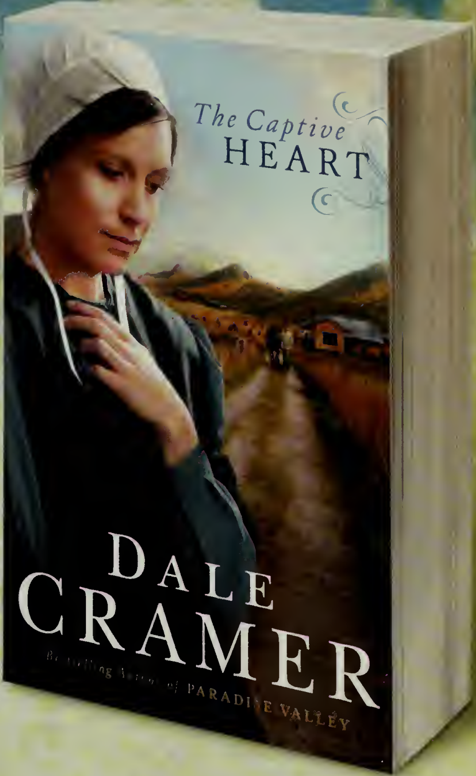
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CALENDAR

The **Damascus Road** antiracism analysis training returns to Philadelphia Mennonite High School ***Feb. 24-26***. This analysis provides much of the foundation for becoming intercultural in ways that are transformational and missional. Information and registration is available at franconiaconference.org/mission or 267-932-6050.

"Know Jesus," the bi-annual event for Junior High (grades 6-8) youth groups will be taking place at Goshen (Ind.) College ***Aug. 3-5***. It is an opportunity for junior highers to grow in their relationship with Jesus while also having a fun and exciting weekend of fellowship with their peers."Know Jesus" is a joint effort by Amigo Centre and Camp Friedenswald, for more information or to register, visit amigocentre.org or friedenswald.org.

Bicycle the San Juans: Give a gift that will take your favorite cyclist bicycling five days through beautiful scenery on the "paradise islets" of Washington and benefit MCC. **Aug. 5-10**. For registration information, contact Trish Hershberger-Handrich, 503-201-7605 or trish.handrich@gmail.com.

WORKERS

Garland, John, was licensed as pastor of Good News Mennonite Church, San Juan, Texas, on Sept. 29, 2011.

Hernandez, Israel, was licensed as pastor of Alice Mennonite Church, Mathis, Texas, on Sept. 25, 2011.

Sherer, Joseph, was installed as intentional interim pastor at Willow Street Mennonite Church, Willow Street, Pa., on Oct. 9, 2011.

OBITUARIES

Alderfer, Levi C., 87, Telford, Pa., died Nov. 16, 2011, of bladder cancer. Spouse: Arlene H. Musselman Alderfer. Parents: Levi L. and Edna D. Clemmer Alderfer. Children: Nancy Leatherman, John, Ruth Bower; 10 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 19 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

Anders, Earl M., 99, Souderton, Pa., died Nov. 6, 2011. Spouse: Mary B. Nyce Anders (deceased). Parents: Menno and Lizzie Moyer Anders. Children: Betty Kratz, Donald, Earl Jr., Aldine Frankenfield, Rebecca Derstine; 12 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Nov. 13 at Souderton Mennonite Homes, Souderton.

Baker, Anna Mae Moyer, 93, Elkhart, Ind., died Nov. 6, 2011. Spouse: Robert J. Baker (deceased). Parents: William Culp Moyer and Lizzie Miller Moyer. Children: Nancy Baker, Rebecca Hoyt, Douglas Baker, Solly Walker, Timothy Baker; 16 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 12 at Belmont Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Birky-Van Ausdal, Beverly L. Klukas, 80, Kouts, Ind., died Oct. 31, 2011. Spouse: Rolan E. Van Ausdal. Spouse: LeRoy Andrew Birky (deceased). Parents: Albert and Laura Ebert Klukas. Children: James Roy Birky, Gary Lee Birky, Janelle Kirby, Colleen Sue Birky; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Step-children: Rodney Van Ausdal, Lori Kerns, Mark Van Ausdal, Jay Van Ausdal; 11 step-grandchildren; 12 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 4 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts.

Cullar, Harold Eugene, 83, North Lima, Ohio, died Nov. 22, 2011. Harold was an active member of Midway Mennonite Church, in Columbiana, Ohio, his entire life. He held the leadership position of Congregational Chair and was active in the Ohio Mennonite Conference. Laurelville Mennonite Church Camp in Mount Pleasant, Pa., benefited from his involvement. He was an ardent supporter of MEDA, Mennonite Economic Development Association, which assists small enterprises in third world countries. Spouse: Louise Thomas Cullar. Parents: John and Rena Metzler Cullar. Children: Lynn Swartzendruber, Jan Talanoa, Kathy Holman, Kenneth; 12 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 26 at Midway Mennonite Church, Columbiana.

Gascho, Delores Schweitzer, 88, Cairo, Neb., died Nov. 24, 2011. Spouse: Glen Gascho. Parents: Meno and Cassie Stutzman Schweitzer. Children: Barbara Loy, Jim, Kathy Anderson, Dave, Glenda Beckler, Ginny Landers; 14 grandchildren; 31 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 24 at First Baptist Church, Cairo.

Gingerich, Wayne Walter, 80, Portland, Ore., died Nov. 22, 2011. Spouse: Vicki Meyer Gingerich. Spouse: Ida Louise Gingerich (deceased). Parents: Walter and Alta Gingerich. Children: Keith, Janet Gingerich; three grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 3 at Portland Mennonite Church.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794.

Hesed, Larry Mann, 66, Newton, Kan., died Nov. 4, 2011, of complications from multiple myeloma cancer. Spouse: Laurie Wilson Hesed. Parents: Clifford Emerson Mann and Helen Catherine Ebersole Mann. Children: Joel Hesed, Kyle Miller Hesed, Kezia Ramey. Funeral: Nov. 7 at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Pawnee Rock, Kan.

Hoeflich, Charles H., 97, Bedminster, Pa., died Nov. 28, 2011. Parents: Llewellyn and Mary Ann Hoeflich. Funeral: Dec. 6 at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Perkasie, Pa.

Kuehn, Peter, 91, O'Fallon, Mo., died Nov. 26, 2011. Spouse: Emma Bartel Kuehn (deceased). Parents: Peter and Augusta Zimmerman Kuehn. Children: Erick, Karl; nine grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 3 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Lehman, E. Grace Kauffman, 85, Lancaster, Pa., and Thomas Mills, Pa., died Nov. 10, 2011. Spouse: Ernest W. Lehman (deceased). Parents: Mast and Beulah Mast Kauffman. Children: Lois Snader, Mary Witmer, Deborah Howard, Joel, Jonathan; nine grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 15 at Thomas Mennonite Church, Hollsopple, Pa.

Metzler, Laura A., 96, Columbiana, Ohio, died Dec. 8, 2011. Parents: Harvey A. and Edith Rickert Metzler. Miss Metzler was a 1932 graduate of North Lima High School where she was valedictorian. She led a life of dedication to her church and service to others through her work with missions both home and abroad. She served as a secretary for over 20 years at the Bethany Christian High School of Goshen, Ind., retiring in 1980. She was a member of the North Lima Mennonite Church. Funeral: Dec. 11 at North Lima Mennonite Church, North Lima, Ohio.

Miller, Andrew A., 89, Mashulaville, Miss., died Nov. 20, 2011. Spouse: Sara Fry Miller (deceased). Parents: Andy S. and Lydia Beachy Miller. Children: Larry, Kenneth. Funeral: Nov. 26 at Mashulaville Dormitory.

Nolt, Irene E. Eby, 89, Manheim, Pa., died Oct. 7, 2011. Spouse: Miles O. Nolt (deceased). Parents: Eli and Mary Winey Eby. Children: Fay E. Landis, Glenn E., Clair E., Dale E.; nine grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim.

Rohrer, Maybelle Neuhouser, 90, Bradenton, Fla., died Nov. 14, 2011, of injuries sustained in a fall. Spouse: Herman Rohrer. Children: Douglas, Pam Crawford; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Bayshore Mennonite Church, Sarasota, Fla.

Rupp, Doris M. Wyse, 88, Wauseon, Ohio, died Nov. 19, 2011. Spouse: Donald R. Rupp (deceased). Parents: Freeman and Ida Seiler Wyse. Children: Jerry, Peggy Wysong, Michael, Mary Nyberg, Susan Rupp, Cathy Rupp; 13 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Schrock, Ada Frey, 88, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 24, 2011. Spouse: Joe Schrock (deceased). Parents: Aaron and Anna Rupp Frey. Children: Joe, Tom, Norma Hershberger, Ann Mooney, Doug; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 29 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Wiley, Alton "A.J." J., 70, Springs, Pa., died Dec. 2, 2011. Spouse: Phoebe Beachy Wiley. Parents: Viett E. and Martha Killius Wiley. Children: Melody Hetrick, James, Debra Baer; three grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 5 at Springs Mennonite Church.

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CORD | OBITUARIES

Beloved mother, grandmother and sister, **Lydia Henderson**, died December 18, 2009, at the age of 62. Having endured an 18-month battle with cancer, and with her family by her side in Enumclaw, Washington, Lydia left this life as serenely as she had lived it.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, December 23, at Greenwood Mennonite Church in Renton, Washington, where Lydia was an energetic member for the past 32 years.

Lydia was born July 10, 1947, in Anchorage to Charles and Phoebe Smith. She graduated from Washington High School in 1978. She attended college at the University of Washington, where she met and married Eugene Henderson. After graduation, they returned to Enumclaw.

Mrs. Henderson was a homemaker and spent many summers with her grandchildren in remote areas of the Alaskan wilderness.

She belonged to the Arboretum Foundation garden club and worked with various charities. Her interests included family, gardening, sewing and reading. She devoted much of her time and energy as a caregiver to family members, including her mother until she passed away at age 70.

Mrs. Henderson is survived by her sister, Virginia Coiro; brother, Carl Snow; 2 sons their spouses, George and Eugene Snow, Jeff and Connie Snow; and 13 en.

als may be given to the American n her honor.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite,* call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or e-mail advertising@themennonite.org.

***Dean of Students*:** **Rosedale Bible College**, an accredited two-year college in central Ohio operated by the Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC), is seeking candidates for the position of dean of students, to begin summer 2012. The dean of students oversees the nonacademic elements of the student experience, including student activities, dorm life, community service, chapel programs, student nurture and spiritual development. The dean is also a member of the college's Administrative Council and will be expected to teach part-time. The ideal candidate will be a Christian who is in agreement with the CMC statements of faith, has proven leadership and ministry experience and possesses at least a master's degree in a field relevant to the college's curriculum. Inquiries, resumes and nominations should be sent to: President Dan Ziegler, Rosedale Bible College, 2270 Rosedale Rd., Irwin, OH 43029, or to dziegler@rosedale.edu. 740-857-1311.

Bluffton University invites applications for a ***full-time, tenure-track position in food and nutrition*** beginning fall 2012. Review of applications begins on Jan. 6 and continues until position is filled. Please visit our website at www.bluffton.edu/about/employment for position responsibilities, requirements and process for submitting an application. Bluffton University welcomes applications from all academically qualified people who respect the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace church tradition and endorse Christian higher education in a liberal arts environment. Members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Two faculty positions in biology: (1) Tenure-track professor of biology—**Goshen College**'s Department of Biology seeks a ***full-time, tenure-track assistant or associate professor of biology*** to start in August 2012, with a specialization in anatomy, physiology, neuroscience or other health-related areas of research. Course load to include anatomy and physiology and possibly human pathophysiology or developmental vertebrate biology. (2) ***Visiting professor of biology***—visiting professor of biology to teach Anatomy and Physiology I and Human Pathophysiology II to start January 2012. A third course, Anatomy and Physiology II is taught during May term. For further details and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment.

"***Life, Love, Llamas and Laughs: My Story***." 459 pages. 54 illustrations. Autobiography. From Lancaster County, Pa., to Mayo Clinic. Service in Southern Highlands and Congo, Mennonite Medical Association, Rochester Mennonite Church and Heifer Project International. Llama breeder since 1981. $17.95 plus $4 postage. Order from **Art Kennel**, 211 Second St. NW #1908, Rochester, MN 55901.

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference seeking ***full-time executive conference minister***. Qualifications: Experience in pastoral and/or denominational leadership, commitment to the church, administrative and leadership gifts/experience, ability to maintain effective, collaborative relationships, bilingual proficiency preferred. Contact nancyk@mennoniteusa.org.

Camp Friedenswald is seeking an individual, couple or family to fill a voluntary service position as ***guest host***. Position requires an outgoing and hospitable personality and good communication skills. Must be available two weekends a month plus an additional week during each of the summer months. Housing and some meals provided. Call 269-476-9744 or e-mail info@friedenswald.org for more information.

Mennonite Congregation of Boston seeks a part-time ***pastor*** for our small urban church starting late summer 2012. Contact mcob.psc@gmail.com for full job description.

East Goshen Mennonite Church announces an opening for an ***administrative assistant***. We are seeking a person who will provide office management and administrative services for the staff and congregation. The qualified candidate will possess strong relationship skills, competence with computers, document publication and a basic understanding of financial accounting. This is a three-quarter-time position with competitive hourly pay and benefits. Please contact steves@eastgoshenmc.org regarding the position opening.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Type ISBN number 1463665091 in the search window of the Books section. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984.

RESOURCES

Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality by Gordon Houser (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $16.95) explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how its spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship by Joanna R. Shenk (Herald Press, 2011, $14.99) presents stories and reflections that explore the creative tension between communities formed to live out a radical Anabaptist-Mennonite vision and the institutional church.

Sweet Fruit from the Bitter Tree: 61 Stories of Creative and Compassionate Ways Out of Conflict by Mark Andreas (Real People Press, 2011, $16.50) presents stories of how real people have dealt with conflict in creative ways, from the kinds of conflict all of us face to the intensity of war and threats of extreme violence.

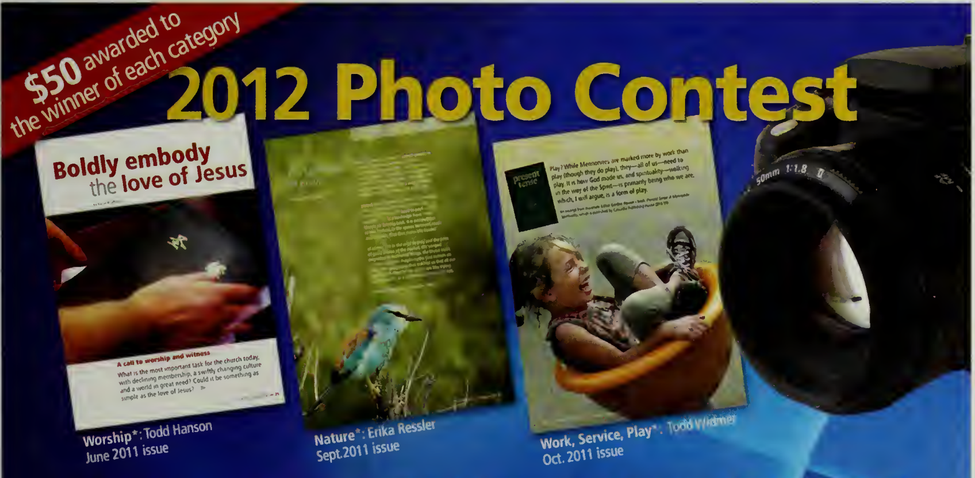
Broken Halleluhahs: Why Popular Music Matters to Those Seeking God by Christian Scharen (Brazos Press, 2011, $17.99) shows readers how to engage faith and culture through a wide range of popular music, including the blues, hip-hop and rock. Scharen examines artists and bands such as Arcade Fire, Kanye West, Leonard Cohen and Billie Holiday, offering a theology of culture in conversation with C.S. Lewis that can look suffering and brokenness in the face because it knows of a love deeper than hate, a hope stronger than despair.

The New Yoder, edited by Peter Dula and Chris K. Huebner (The Lutterworth Press, 2011, $47.50), collects essays by a new generation of scholars that has begun reading John Howard Yoder alongside figures associated with post-structuralism, neo-Nietzscheanism and post-colonialism. Also included are essays by writers outside Christianity.

The End of Sacrifice: The Capital Punishment Writings of John Howard Yoder, edited by John Nugent (Herald Press, 2011, $16.99), collects Yoder's writings on the subject of capital punishment over four decades.

With the Word: Psalms (Herald Press, 2011, $8.99) is the first title in a Bible study and devotional series that explores specific books of the Bible from an Anabaptist perspective. **Luke** is also available.

After We're Gone (Herald Press, 2011, $8.99) offers a Christian perspective on estate and life planning for families that include a dependent member with a disability.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2012 Photo Contest
Boldly embody the love of Jesus
A call to worship and witness
What is the most important task for the church today, with declining membership, a swiftly changing culture and a world in great need? Could it be something as simple as the love of Jesus?
Worship*: Todd Hanson
June 2011 issue
Nature*: Erika Ressler
Sept.2011 issue
Work, Service, Play*: Todd Widmer
Oct. 2011 issue

Submit your photos to *The Mennonite*'s 2012 photo contest.

Your work may be chosen for future publication in *The Mennonite*. For submission instructions and photo categories, go to www.themennonite.org/issues/14-11/articles/Photo_Contest_2012. Submission deadline: January 31, 2012.

* Photo shown as it appeared in print

Three bad habits toward the poor

Peter Epp teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba, a land overflowing with the bounty of farmer sausage.

Recently, a young Mennonite told me she wasn't interested in the institutional Mennonite church. She was inspired instead, she said, by the radical work for the poor that she saw described by Shane Claiborne.

As a Mennonite who loves the Mennonite church, that usually makes me defensive. But I'm starting to get over it. Sure, I believe the Mennonite church desperately needs its young people, but I also believe that the church desperately needs more Shane Clabornes. Here's part of why I feel that way:

Four years ago, my wife started working in homelessness. I told myself I was too busy to help, but a month later I found myself volunteering at a shelter. Soon I was helping lead a monthly meal.

At one of those meals, I met Joe. Joe clearly had little. He was my age, passionately faithful, and he asked my permission to play his guitar and sing praise songs. I don't know why he asked for my permission, but he did. And I don't know why I hesitated to say yes, but I did.

> Virtually every time a prophet shows up in the Old Testament, he tells the Israelites that their avoidance of the poor is ugly. Really ugly.

Joe was a fantastic singer. He was also an easy person to talk to. We hit it off. I know this isn't an OK way to describe it, but on some level I was feeling pretty proud of myself for making a "homeless friend."

Then, just when I was feeling good about my friendship with Joe, he showed up for a meal in a lot of pain. He didn't sing. He talked just enough to explain that he had a painful infection in his mouth. He never asked me to help, but he talked to me about it like a friend would—and he told me he could not afford to fix it. The infection was clearly not going away; it was just going to get worse.

I told Josh I would pray for him. And I did. But I also told myself it was unreasonable to pay for any dental help. Because you just don't do that, right? Because what would he ask for next? And how much would I be obligated to give over the long haul? The slope was just too slippery, right?

I prayed, sure. But I didn't give Joe a penny of actual help. And so I realized: I was interested in getting to know him well enough to look and feel good, but I wasn't treating him like a real friend.

As I wrestled with this, I realized I have at least three bad habits I haven't overcome. I think most of us do.

Bad habit #1: I dehumanize. Those of us with money and influence create rules that treat people with money as normal and people without as nuisances. We do this with laws. We make tents and makeshift shelters illegal. We make laws against panhandling or sitting or lying down in public. We basically make being poor illegal.

Bad habit #2: I give up on people. Even if we start to build relationships, things will probably get hard. I befriend someone, but then I realize he needs serious dental help. Or I notice he has his own bad habits. And so I quit.

But often—and this is **bad habit #3: I fail to even see my bad habits.** Since bad habit #1 is to believe that my affluent ways of doing things are normal, I insulate myself in friends, beliefs and situations that tell me the same thing. Does someone need more than I want to give? None of my friends is giving that much—so that must be what normal people do.

The problem is, this is not what God's normal is. Virtually every time a prophet shows up in the Old Testament, he tells the Israelites that their avoidance of the poor is ugly. Really ugly. Rotting-crops and wasted-landscapes ugly. What we think is normal is not what God thinks is normal.

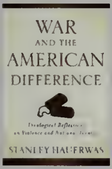
So, if God is telling me to give more, but I haven't been able to do it yet, I'm in no place to judge when someone else feels called to do it. Yes, I often wish it came with more denominational commitment. But I also know that if enough of us respond supportively, maybe the next young adult to feel this call won't feel it coming from beyond our church. They'll feel it coming from within. And soon, maybe so will we.

FILM REVIEW

Hugo (PG), which the National Board of Review named the best film of 2011, is a delightful tale of a 12-year-old orphan who lives in the walls of a train station in 1930s Paris and tries to solve a mystery involving his late father and an automaton. Shot in 3D, the film celebrates the beginnings of film and incorporates that history into the story.—*Gordon Houser*

The Descendants (R) explores themes of death, grief, infidelity and family relationships. In an excellent performance, George Clooney plays Matt King, a land baron who tries to reconnect with his two daughters after a boating accident leaves his wife in a coma. Strong on dialogue, this film combines humor and pathos in showing family healing.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS



War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity by Stanley Hauerwas (BakerAcademic, 2011, $19.99) explores how America depends on war for its identity, how war affects the soul of a nation, the sacrifices that war entails, and why war is considered "necessary," especially in America. It has his usual plethora of provocative statements: "American Protestants do not have to believe in God because they believe in belief." "America is a culture of death because Americans cannot conceive of how life is possible in the face of death."—*gh*

The End of War by John Horgan (McSweeney's Books, 2011, $22) argues that "war will end for scientific reasons" and "must end for moral reasons." Horgan debunks many myths about the inevitability of war and points to the power of nonviolence in ending it. He writes that "those of us who want to make the world a better place … should make abolishing the invention of war our priority."—*gh*

A Bible to actually read

According to one survey, 92 percent of American households own a Bible, and of those who own a Bible, the average number owned is three.

Owning a Bible is one thing; reading it is another. According to a 2000 Gallup survey, only 37 percent of Americans read the Bible at least once per week. And women (42 percent) read it more than men (32 percent).

COMMON
ENGLISH
BIBLE
New Testament

Beyond reading it, only 14 percent of Americans belong to a Bible study.

Then we look at understanding it. Decreasing biblical literacy is common knowledge. Here are just a few examples from that same Gallup survey: only half of U.S. adults could name one of the four Gospels, only 42 percent could identify Jesus as the person who delivered the Sermon on the Mount, and 12 percent of adults believe that Noah's wife was Joan of Arc.

That was more than 10 years ago; today it's only worse.

To help address that dearth of reading and understanding the Bible, 120 scholars from 24 Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faith communities have created a new translation called the Common English Bible (CEB).

The CEB is sponsored by an alliance of publishers from the following denominations: Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Episcopal Church, United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church.

The CEB seeks to make the Bible more accessible to the common reader. It tries to substitute more natural wording for traditional biblical terminology. For instance, where most Bibles use the term "son of man" in the Old Testament (e.g. Ezekiel 2:1) the CEB translates it as "human." In the New Testament, where Jesus uses the Greek version of this term of himself—probably with messianic overtones—the CEB renders it "the Human One." Another example of common English is substituting "harass" for "persecute": "If the world harassed me, it will harass you too" (John 15:20).

The CEB uses a balance of dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence translation principles. It measures ease of comprehension using the standard Dale-Chall Readability Formula to attain a seventh-grade reading level. The translators' goal was to produce a rendering of the Bible at the same reading level as the *USA Today* newspaper. One element of this is the use of contractions. "Do not be afraid" in the NRSV becomes "Don't be afraid."

People always ask, Why a new translation? One reason is that language and language communities are constantly changing. Adapting an ancient and beloved text to current audiences is no small task.

2011 marked the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible translation, which is widely lauded as a remarkable literary feat. Even militant atheists such as the late Christopher Hitchens praise its beautiful, poetic language.

Without disparaging its literary quality, one needs to ask, Is it readable? Produced in the language of Shakespeare, it is readable. But is it read? And if read, is it understood?

I suspect that many of the scholars who laud its beauty don't necessarily believe its content.

The CEB is meant to be read and understood, not to be treated in some otherworldly manner. Whether or not we use this new translation, let us at least read the book that helps form our faith. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

not feel like an appropriate part of your periodical. And especially, I have concern about your review of films with an R rating. I do not think all R-rated movies are inappropriate to watch, but I believe there is some danger in the impression of endorsement given by reviewing them.

For example, as a youth group leader at our church, discussion of R-rated movies comes up frequently with the high school youth I am with. While I do not condemn them, I also do not give comment that could be viewed as an affirmation of watching them. It is not that R-rated movies are necessarily wrong to view just because of the rating, but rather I believe it is their parents that should be given the prerogative of deciding if R-rated movies are appropriate for them and should have the primary discussion with them on that.

I worry that when the "church periodical" frequently reviews R-rated films, it gives an impression to readers that viewing R-rated movies is acceptable and even endorsed by the church. I encourage you to consider discontinuing the review of films unless they have religious significance, or at least to discontinue the review of R-rated movies.—*Jeffrey K. Landis, Souderton, Pa.*

Regrets loss of Poetry page

I was sorry to read in the November 2011 issue that you will be discontinuing your poetry page. I have been grateful to *The Mennonite* for publishing my poems over the years and have found that *The Mennonite* fills an important gap for those of us inspired by our faith and by poetry. *The Mennonite* is unashamedly Christian, but it was also willing to take risks with the way faith is described and experienced in the poetry it publishes. It didn't only publish poetry that followed tradition, either in content or in style. It was willing to publish poetry that came at faith from new and different angles, angles that can make the faith journey more accessible to more people.

In addition, *The Mennonite* did a beautiful job in presenting each poem it accepted by juxtaposing that poem against a gorgeous photograph. This made the poem and its message a more accessible, more appealing experience for its readers.

People ask me why so many of my poems have been published by *The Mennonite.* I tell them it was because *The Mennonite* was my favorite place to be published.

I want to thank *The Mennonite* for helping my poetry reach its own readers as well as many others when those poems are featured on The Writer's Almanac or disseminated through my website. Also, I want to express my sincere hope that *The Mennonite* will reinstate its Poetry page as soon as possible and allow this unique and potent form of Christian ministry to continue.—*Julie Cadwallader-Staub, South Burlington, Vt.*

Editor's note: *The Poetry page was one of eight deleted from the magazine to offset postage and paper price increases initiated this month.*

Vaccination decisions are difficult

I usually find the Miscellany section of *The Mennonite* an enlightening way to stay abreast of world news that needs to be connected to our faith. However, the November piece, "We're All Connected and Therefore All Potentially Infected," fails to include several crucial points. When considering Dr. Offit's statements regarding the necessity of vaccines, it's important to take into account his numerous ties to the vaccine industry—including those documented in a 2000 U.S. Congressional Report, among other sources. Likewise, it is appropriate to balance the tragic stories cited in the article by also recognizing the tens of thousands of tragedies documented in VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) reports.

We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made, and God's awe-inspiring handiwork includes an amazing immune system that is unique to each individual. While some vaccines may be a safe and important prevention strategy for many people, not all vaccines are safe for all individuals. Those of us who make the difficult and sometimes heart-wrenching decisions about which vaccines are and are not right for our children—and when and how they might be given—are not rebelling against an obligation by our government, as Gordon Houser suggests. (In fact, neither the U.S. government nor public school systems actually mandate vaccinations.) Rather, we are simply trying to protect the special children God has blessed us with.—*Joy Fasick, Gardners, Pa.*

The nature of kings

Great kingdoms appear subject to constraints leading to ruin. Biblical Samuel gave warnings as to demands and the nature of kings. The Roman Empire, being built upon pillage and slavery, later lay in ruin.

Today, nations like ours have many powerful kings. Their greatness and wealth makes similar demands. By free markets and globalization, they make claims to resources and cheap labor in remote regions of our world. Their demands are greater than any past pharaoh or king. Likewise, being built upon forms of plunder and environmental ruin, they take more from life than is given in return. Great kingdoms never endure, for such is the nature of its kings.

But there came a king of humble estate, who held the lowly high rather than the powerful. His was not a sterile environment, removed from the multitudes, perched on a throne. He taught, healed and was touched by ordinary people. He spoke of a kingdom without the constraints of time, matter or space but having an everlasting domain.

Behold the nature of this King.
—*Lynn Slagel, Goshen, Ind.*

Signposts on the missional journey

Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."—Mark 16:15 TNIV

At the delegate session in Pittsburgh last summer, André Gingerich Stoner remarked that many Mennonites "love service, flirt with peace and are allergic to evangelism." Many felt he hit a home run with that comment. That means we have a ways to go to become a missional church. Service, peacemaking and evangelism are all needed in order to fully proclaim the gospel.

The Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan for Mennonite Church USA highlight 12 signposts along the path to becoming a faithful missional church. These signposts are not original with me. They are listed in an appendix in *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns and Missional Faithfulness* by Lois Y. Barrett and others.

By God's grace, I intend to highlight one of these signposts each month. So here's the one I invite you to ponder in January:

Missional character trait: The missional church proclaims the gospel.

Signpost: The story of God's salvation is faithfully repeated in a multitude of ways.

This trait may seem so basic to Mennonite identity that you may wonder if it needs discussion. But wait. It's easy for our congregations to become so distracted by other agenda that we lose our focus on God's salvation. Further, we live in a cultural environment that is increasingly inhospitable, even hostile, to the idea that we need salvation from God.

In their book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005), Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton discovered a different "gospel" emerging in our nation. Smith and Lundquist describe this religion as "moralistic therapeutic deism," which posits that the central goal in life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. Further, that God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.

In contrast to these insipid beliefs that empty Christian faith of its passion and power, missional congregations trust that God is intimately involved in the affairs of the world. A dynamic proclamation of the gospel brings God's grace into the situations of trouble in the world.

As Paul Scott Wilson has said, "Trouble + Grace = Hope where Grace > Trouble." God's mercy and forgiveness have little meaning apart from a troubled situation, especially when accented by a sense of sin, guilt or divine justice. God's provision has little value without a deep sense of need.

The achievement of truly missional goals can only be accomplished by God's presence and power. The gift of grace, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the community of faith all help make it possible to discern what God is seeking to bring about in the world and how we can share in God's purposes. When we cultivate a deep awareness of God's work—past, present and future—we are better prepared to take our place in response to it. We learn to cooperate with God's work in the world rather than co-opt it with our human agendas shaped by worldly assumptions and goals.

The gospel has the power to transform our lives, enabling us to live as a contrast society to the world around us. It is God's chosen way of bringing healing and hope to the world.

Darrell Guder writes, "If Christian faith makes any difference in behavior, then the church in conformity with Christ is called to an alternative set of behaviors, an alternative ethic, an alternative kind of relationship, in dialogue with the surrounding cultures. Its difference is itself a witness to the gospel. … The church is called to be an expression of God's reign, a community of the kingdom of God on earth."

I desire that every congregation in Mennonite Church USA will be just that, in actions as well as words. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Mennonites and the Occupy movement

Everett J. Thomas

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement is going to be with us for a while. Mennonites who are not ignoring it are trying to figure out how to relate to it. Some joyfully participate. Some angrily reject it. But it may be God at work.

Nathan Graber-McCrae participated in an Occupy Denver event. We published his letter (page 4) on the magazine's Facebook page.

"I was amazed to see and hear," Nathan says in both places, "the protesters expressing sentiments that Mennonites, Anabaptists and other Christians have been claiming for decades, even centuries—hunger for social justice, solidarity with the poor and struggling, resistance to increasing corporate control of government, and deep suspicion of Wall Street and banks that are too big to fail. As I watch the OWS movement gain in strength and popularity nationwide, I can't help wondering, Where are the Mennonites?"

How might Mennonites engage the Occupy movement? The answer will not be the same for everyone.

The Facebook post sparked a record number of responses, primarily because one person argued with nearly everyone who expressed support or sympathy for the Occupy movement.

For those of us who came of age during the Vietnam War era, this brings back memories of the antiwar movement. We discovered that suddenly our pacifism was in vogue. Some Mennonites marched in antiwar demonstrations, burned draft cards or moved to Canada to avoid the draft. Other Mennonites wanted nothing to do with these new pacifists whose resistance to war had little to do with following Christ as a disciple.

The same dynamic is again in play.

After years of advocating for the weak and disenfranchised in society, we suddenly discover that the way we view the world's needs is again in vogue. But the problem during the antiwar movement 40 years ago was the troubling values and questionable lifestyles of many who wanted the Vietnam War to stop.

So how might Mennonites engage the Occupy movement? As usual, the answer will not be the same for everyone.

On page 32, Anna Groff reports on several Mennonites who have been participating in the Occupy movement. Kara Bender organized an action in Chicago on Nov. 7, 2011, that called on public officials not to cut funding to programs such as Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security. Bender is a member of Reba Place Fellowship Community. Twenty members from Reba Place Church attended the Chicago Occupy event. Six, including Bender, were arrested and ticketed, but not jailed.

But others want no part of the Occupy movement and are angry that some Mennonites participate.

"There aren't any true Mennonites in Occupy," wrote the Facebook participant whose first rebuttal sparked dozens of responses, "unless you identify Mennonites as people who flagrantly violate the law and have no respect for any type of authority and who … love violence. I would not call anyone associated with this movement someone who truly embraces the Mennonite faith."

I disagree.

If we are becoming a missional church, then the question we ask about any Occupy activity is this: Are there signs that God is at work in the particular event? If—in consultation with other brothers and sisters in the church—the answer is no, then back away. If the answer is even a qualified yes, then engage thoughtfully, offering God's healing and hope.—*ejt*

Delivery problems

On Dec. 2, 2011, the U.S. postal service admitted that it had made substantial changes to how magazines are being processed and that these changes are causing delivery delays. If you do not receive delivery of *The Mennonite* within 10 days from the first of the month, please call your local post office and register a complaint with the postmaster.—*ejt*

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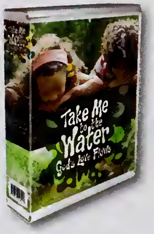
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Waging Peace

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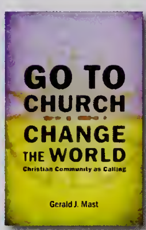
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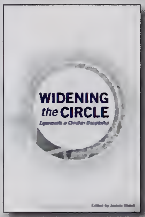
Christian Community as Calling

Gerald J. Mast

In a time when many are questioning the relevance of the church to their spiritual journeys, this book asserts that "going to church"—not just personal virtue or ethics—is at the heart of Christian vocation. Drawing on Anabaptist life and conviction, Mast presents Christ's call to all believers to be the church, whether gathered for worship or scattered for service.

$13.99 USD/$16.00 CAD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Widening the Circle

Experiments in Christian Discipleship

Joanna Shenk, editor

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TheMennonite February 2012 | Volume 15, Number 2

CONTENTS

AMBS
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12 50 years as pastor
—Larry Hauder

15 Is retirement biblical?
—Freeman Miller

18 God heals today
—Judy Ann Eichstedt

20 A church on the move
—Carl Hansen

24 The gospel of peace to all creation
—Matthew Eaton

27 Deliver me from eBay
—Esther M. Bailey

29 Hadad
—Tim Schultz

32 Mennonite Central Committee U.S. lays off workers—Everett J. Thomas

33 Europeans lose MWC presence—Markus Rediger

34 'Following the cloud' one step at a time
—Annette Brill Bergstresser

35 A kidney for Christmas—Serena Townsend

39 Libraries get a second wind—Anna Groff

40 After fire, a new home for Service Adventure unit—Andrew Clouse

44 Naming what divides us—John D. Rempel

ON THE COVER: Pastor Art Roth with his wife, Marge. Photo by John Sawyers

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
48 For the Record
51 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

TheMennonite

February 2012 | Volume 15, Number 2

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The Mennonite
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEB SITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1819
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
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Occupy work

In response to Nathan Graber-McCrae's letter, "Where Are the Occupy Mennonites?" (January): I can't speak for others, but I couldn't make it to the protests because I was working. *—Burdon Peters, Henderson, Neb.*

It is gossip

Regarding "Geyer's Employment Terminated" (January): Does Steve Geyer's tragedy need to be spread throughout the whole Mennonite constituency? It seems like gossip to me. Besides, he is a fallen brother who needs love and community if there is even a chance for forgiveness, healing and restoration. What about his family? They are real people, just like you and me.*—Doris Deiner, Sarasota, Fla.*

Failed to mention hymnal

Christine Longhurst makes some good points in her article "The Words We Sing" (December 2011). However, her analysis has two shortcomings. The first one is that, after acknowledging a scarcity of hymns that refer to the trinitarian nature of God, she then wonders if it matters that "a majority of the songs we sing are directed toward only one or another of the Trinity." Given the scarcity of hymns that refer to the Trinity, the hymns we sing could hardly be otherwise.

The glaring shortcoming is her failure to make any mention of our 1992 *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. How well does this book meet her criteria? That's what she should be reporting to Mennonites. Those of us who choose hymns for worship have several factors to balance on a given Sunday, and the best we can do is trust our hymnal to offer excellent choices.*—Thomas Lehman, Chapel Hill, N.C.*

Doesn't need another intercessor

Regarding "Model or Mother?" (December 2011): Why do we seek to make Mary more than she was? Mary and her other sons had little understanding of the scope and intent of Jesus' ministry, as is shown in the third chapter of Mark. Nowhere does it say she intercedes for me. As a Christian, I have the wonderful privilege of direct access to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no need for another intercessor. The way this author talks about Mary borders on idolatry. No one is to be worshiped but God alone. *—Ernie Reesor, Listowel, Ontario*

Disappointed by terminology

I appreciated Robert Hartzler's article ("Servant Leaders or Christian Executives?" January). I am concerned about the same issues, especially since returning from six years in India, where titles, labels and educational achievements are constantly flaunted by Mennonite church leaders who at least have the excuse of having grown up in the Hindu caste system.

When I returned to the United States in 2007, I was surprised and saddened to discover that terminology used for leaders in Mennonite church circles had changed drastically during my time away: I heard pastors of local congregations refer to themselves (rather proudly, it seemed) as "Pastor John" or "Pastor Bob," and they eagerly encouraged us who sit in the benches—and our youth and even our grandchildren—to refer to them as "Pastor John or Pastor Bob. I was even more upset to see lines like this in the church bulletin: "Pastor John and his family are on vacation this week." Whatever happened to the concept of the priesthood of all believers?

I confess that when I hear our church ministers habitually refer to themselves and other pastors as "Pastor Sue" or "Pastor John," I have to wonder if we are trying to imitate our Baptist or Lutheran friends down the street instead of admitting that we are Anabaptists. Perhaps we do not want to reveal, by the phrases we use, that we are Anabaptists.—*Twila Miller, Akron, Pa.*

Publish names of baptized

In regard to the articles on baptism in the November 2011 issue: Why isn't the entry of a person into the realm of God through baptism worthy of being recognized by the wider church?

Ever since we lived in Canada for some years and having read the *Canadian Mennonite* since that time, I've wondered why we don't follow the example of our northern brothers and sisters and publish names, dates and congregations of those baptized in Mennonite Church USA congregations. It may not be the same as having our names written in the Book of Life, but there is something significant about publicly and widely naming those who have made baptismal vows of allegiance to God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.—*S. Roy Kaufman, Freeman, S.D.*

Need balance for resolution

Regarding "MC USA Responds to Palestinian Christians' Appeal" (December 2011): When there are disagreements, a settlement usually needs the advocates of each side to acknowledge legitimacy in the other's point of view. That's one of the things often lacking in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. While the support of some Mennonites for one side in the conflict may be admirable, it may not be helpful in the long run if there is not commensurate backing for the legitimate concerns of the other.

Some examples in response to Kairos Palestine: It is true that Israel is in violation of United Nations' declarations, including settlements in the West Bank; it is also true that when Arabs resist the existence of an Israeli state, that is counter to the U.N. When the Kairos Palestine document calls for an end to illegal Israeli occupation, it is not talking about the West Bank; it means the state's existence. Does Mennonite Church USA concur? A response of Mennonite Church USA to Kairos Palestine should show sympathy to the Palestinians. It should also reflect the balance needed to finally bring this dispute to an end.—*Paul Hershberger, Goshen, Ind.*

Sing carols during Advent

I am responding to "A Christmas Compromise," the December 2011 editorial that endorses "splitting" Advent and Christmas. I am thankful that I had not read an earlier editorial suggesting we not sing Christmas songs during Advent. I would have been sad to know this position was being endorsed by Mennonite publications and leadership.

I am also thankful that you now recommend Christmas songs be sung during Advent. If my metropolitan region can support a secular radio station and a commercial cable TV channel that plays 24 hours/day of Christmas songs, I hope the Mennonite church can sing Christmas carols during Advent without causing disagreements within the body of Christ.

As an addendum, I would not have been able to answer the Christmas hymns crossword puzzle (December 2011) from memory if my home church had not allowed Christmas carols to be sung during Advent.—*Ferne Alderfer, Henrico, Va.*

IN THIS ISSUE

Several years ago we heard about a pastor in Colorado who had pastored the same congregation for nearly 50 years. We have wanted to do a story about Art Good and his wife, Marjorie. Several months ago the opportunity arrived. Larry Hauder, a former member of the Julesburg Mennonite Church and now a member of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, offered to write an article when the Goods' ministry reached the half-century mark (page 12).

"Relationships that build high trust and friendships like this take time," Hauder says. "It's the same reason mission agencies prefer long-term overseas workers to short-term volunteers."

Coincidentally, we are also publishing Freeman Miller's provocative article, "Is Retirement Biblical?" (page 15). Citing Numbers 8, where God instructs the Levites (priests) to retire at 50, Miller says, "This is the word of the Lord for the work of the Lord. Why had I never heard any sermons or read any Christian self-help books on this passage? "

The news section also carries some important information: On page 32 is an article about the effects of restructuring at Mennonite Central Committee that will cost 32 people their jobs at MCC U.S.

But there is also good news: On page 34, we publish a story about a couple who started a congregation just 15 months after becoming Mennonite. Our intern, Serena Townsend, describes the reasons Laurie Miller gave a kidney to a man he has never met (page 35).

In this issue we also include a thoughtful news analysis by John Rempel entitled, "Naming What Divides Us." —*Editor*

Group explores building houses in North Korea

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Just days before the death of Kim Jong Il on Dec. 17, 2011, in North Korea, Earl Martin of Harrisonburg and a team of builders from the Fuller Center for Housing visited that country. They were in North Korea to explore constructing houses for the workers in a tree nursery outside the capital, Pyongyang.

They introduced a type of insulated concrete form block that stirred much interest from the Koreans. Though it was too cold to pour foundations when they were there, they hope to send new teams during milder weather.

The group represented the first team of builders to go to North Korea with the Fuller Center, a Christian ministry for home building and repair founded by the late Millard Fuller, also the founder of Habitat for Humanity. The Fuller Center hopes to send other teams of builders, although no definite dates are set for the next delegation.

Virginia Mennonite Missions formed a support network around Martin's visit and has channeled funds to the Fuller Center. The venture is as much about building trust and building peace as it is about building houses, says Martin. "The smiles and warmth we received from people in the villages and markets encourage us to pray for new beginnings between our people and the people of this little-understood nation," he says.

Further inquiries can be directed to Earl Martin: patearl@aol.com or The Fuller Center for Housing: fullercenter.org.—*TMail*

Geyer charged with 11 sexual offenses

GOSHEN, Ind.—Steve Geyer, a former assistant principal at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School, was charged Dec. 21, 2011, with 11 sexual offenses. LMS superintendent J. Richard Thomas sent a note to constituents the next day.

Lancaster Online reported on Dec. 22 that Geyer and his wife hosted South Korean students in their home; Geyer threatened the boys with deportation if they did not sleep in a backyard camper with him.

"While they were in the camper," *Lancaster Online* said, "Geyer touched the boys sexually, sometimes while he believed they were sleeping, the boys said. East Lampeter (Pa.) Township police [Dec. 21] charged Geyer, 56, with indecent assault, corruption of minors and other offenses for the contact with the boys. … The abuse happened between August 2010 and November of this year, police said."

Lancaster Mennonite School placed Geyer on administrative leave on Nov. 4, 2011, after learning about the accusations. His employment was terminated on Nov. 17.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Heidi Lee

EMM teams visit camp

A Congolese mother holds her child in the Dadab, Kenya, refugee camp, which was built 20 years ago to hold 90,000 people but now serves over 500,000. Eastern Mennonite Mission worker Heidi Lee facilitated two multinational teams that visited the camp last October. One team carried soap, combs, shampoo, lotion, washing basins and new "khangas" (colorful dress cloths) to give the refugees. Later a second team led a trauma healing seminar.—*EMM*

Gene Herr, retreat center founder, dies at 79

HESSTON, Kan.—Herbert Eugene (Gene) Herr, 79, founder of The Hermitage retreat center at Three Rivers, Mich., died Jan. 1 of complications related to cancer.

Herr and Mary, his wife, founded The Hermitage in 1985. Endorsed by Indiana-Michigan Conference and Mennonite Church USA, the retreat center is a place for silent retreats, spiritual formation and walks along wooded trails. They worked there as directors until retiring in 2001.

Herr was ordained May 15, 1955, while serving as pastor at Kingview Mennonite Church in Scottdale, Pa. He then became national youth fellowship director for the Mennonite Church, serving from 1955 to 1966. He later served as pastor at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kan., as director of Christian education at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., and co-director of the Phoenix Discipleship and Service program of Mennonite Board of Missions.

Herr graduated from Goshen College with a degree in Bible, took courses at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., received a master's degree in religious education from Phillips University, Enid, Okla., a master's degree in divinity from Notre Dame University, South Bend, Ind., and studied at St. Paul (Minn.) School of Theology.—*Mennonite Weekly Review*

Ten Thousand Villages' CEO to leave post

LANCASTER, Pa.—Ten Thousand Villages' board of directors announced on Dec. 27, 2011, the formation of a search committee to recruit a new chief executive officer (CEO) to lead its network of more than 75 retail stores in the US. Craig Schloneger will step down as CEO on March 31. Alex Hartzler, board

MCC photo by Paul Mosley

Building trust while making money for families

Working together to produce handicrafts for income generation, like these Rwandese women are doing, is an important step toward building trust while working on projects that will bring in money for their families and community. Peace and Durable Development has supported the organization of this group.—*Mennonite Central Committee*

chair for Ten Thousand Villages, leads the committee that will find Schloneger's successor.

Hartzler praised Schloneger for his six years of service as CEO. Some of the organization's accomplishments during Schloneger's tenure include record accomplishments in sales, artisan purchases and employee growth in a declining retail industry environment; an increase in artisan purchasing relationships and the opening of nearly 25 new stores.—*Ten Thousand Villages*

MWC Asia Caucus strengthens identity

KOLKATA, India—Strengthening Anabaptist identity, learning more about Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and its responsibilities and proposing priorities for the future were the main issues that engaged Asian members of the MWC General Council at a training session for the Asia Caucus Nov. 15-19, 2011, in Kolkata.

The event was attended by 32 people, including 29 men and three women from 18 national churches in Asia and the Pacific. Only Vietnam and Australia were missing. Also attending was a representative from the Mennonite Brethren Conference in Japan, which is not a member of MWC. Serving as conveners were Cynthia Peacock (India) and Bert Lobe (Canada), with assistance from Shant Kunjam and Manjula Roul (both from India).—*MWC*

Miller named pastor at Covenant Mennonite

SARASOTA, Fla.—Covenant Mennonite Fellowship of Sarasota named Jim Miller its pastor on Jan. 8.

Miller has been a member of Covenant since 2004 and has helped to lead the congregation since its previous pastor, Randall Spaulding, left in July 2011 to pursue educational opportunities at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Conn.

Covenant Fellowship left Southeast Mennonite Conference last Nov. 15, following SMC's September 2009 decision to revoke Spaulding's ministerial credentials. The SMC leadership board cited Spaulding's disclosure of his desire to pursue a covenanted same-sex relationship as the reason.

Miller brings previous pastoral experience to his assignment, as well as experience in higher education and business.

Miller previously served as associate pastor at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church from 1993-98. During that time he also served in various capacities within the Southeast Mennonite Conference and the Mennonite Church USA. He was also president of the Sarasota Chapter of Mennonite Economic Development Associates, president of the Sunnyside Village Foundation and a founding member of Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity.—*adapted from a release from Covenant Mennonite Fellowship*

Canadian youth assembly to move to two-year cycle

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—After considering a number of options, the Christian Formation Council, at its October 2011 meeting, approved a cycle of Canadian youth gatherings that will see a stand-alone event held in Manitoba in 2013. Two years later, in 2015, Mennonite Church Canada will plan a unique gathering opportunity in conjunction with the dates of the global Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Pennsylvania. Then, in 2016, the Youth Assembly will take place on the regular biennial cycle of national gatherings, together with adult delegate meetings.

Mennonite Church Manitoba youth pastors and area church leaders are extending an invitation to all Mennonite Church Canada youth to come to Manitoba for Youth Assembly 2013. This will be a "youth only" gathering, falling between the even-numbered years of the biennial cycle of delegate gatherings approved by Mennonite Church Canada delegates in Waterloo in July 2011.—*Mennonite Church Canada*

When was it we saw you?

Sara Dick
is associate pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Have you ever walked past someone you do not know—someone older or younger than you, someone richer or poorer than you, someone cooler or squarer than you—and you try to make eye contact, but it doesn't happen?

So you make a deal with yourself: You will greet them if you make eye contact. The problem is that you both have to look at each other at exactly the same moment, and a stranger is not likely to look at you if she thinks you won't truly see her.

Maybe you never make eye contact and so you keep walking or shopping or pumping gas or whatever you're doing without ever acknowledging them—and for what? To keep you from looking foolish because you have said hello to someone who did not reply? What a pity!

The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, you are living in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.
—Ezekiel 12:1-3a

This kind of split-second negotiation happens inside my head on a regular basis, when I am going into the public library or walking down the sidewalk in an unfamiliar neighborhood or shopping for groceries. Far too often, whether at home or on the street, I have eyes to see but do not see, and ears to hear but do not hear.

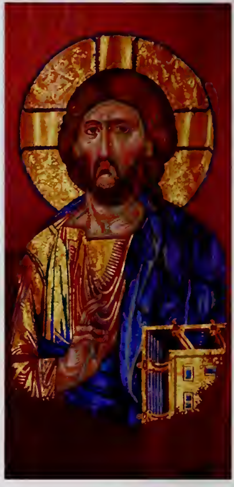
Icons must first of all be truthful before they are beautiful.
—Michel Quenot

Yet the Word became flesh and lived among us. In the person of Jesus, we can glimpse God—without slipping into idolatry—whether we see images of Jesus depicted in art or revealed in the face of another person.

Paul writes to Colossian believers that "Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15). Orthodox Christians believe that in the face of Jesus there is potential to witness the Incarnation in a way that transfigures and transforms the viewer.

In the Orthodox Christian tradition, portraits of Christ, called icons, began to take on certain standard characteristics: large, deeply lined eyes that look straight ahead at the viewer; stylized facial features, such as a long nose and pursed lips; and specific gestures and colors that convey meaning, especially gold to symbolize divine light.

Michel Quenot, an Orthodox Christian, writes that icons must first of all be truthful before they are beautiful: "Today, when the human countenance is so disfigured, when racial discrimination persists, when so many people suffer from a lack of genuine, sincere communication, faces on the icons radiating a light that comes from beyond fascinate and beckon us to contemplate. Although they speak indeed of God, they also speak about humanity" (*The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*). The paradox of the icon is that it depicts a Christ that looks so "unrealistic," so unlike us in its details, and that, at the same time, can call us to see Christ in each other.



Christ Pantocrator fabric mosaic by Michelle L. Hofer, based on the 13th-century mosaic from the Hagia Sophia cathedral in Istanbul, Turkey

When Jesus is speaking to the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, he tells them about a king who will separate those who are blessed from those who are accursed. The king (Jesus) tells the first group, "I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me something to drink." They ask him, "When was it that we saw you?" They had not recognized Jesus' image in the faces of the hungry, the poor, the alien, the dying, the imprisoned, but they had served him in "the least of these who are members of my family."

So you make yourself a new deal: Walking past a stranger, you say hello instead of waiting for eye contact. You greet them, conscious of God's image within them, seeing Christ's face in theirs, allowing the Spirit to move us and our communities toward greater wholeness.

Christ, help us see you.
Christ, help us hear you.
Christ, help us know you.
Amen. TM

1948 meetings reoriented our thinking

In early August 1948, a remarkable event in the history of Anabaptist-Mennonite churches occurred. For seven days—first at Goshen, Ind., and then at North Newton, Kan.—Mennonites from countries that had fought each other in World War II met face-to-face to discuss their shared future.

For most of the previous decade, their countries had been locked in a devastating war that unleashed enormous human suffering and reduced the symbols of European civilization to a smoldering pile of ashes. Now, as questions of refugee resettlement, "war guilt" and the legacy of the Holocaust dominated the public discussion, Mennonites from these formerly warring nations gathered for the Fourth General Assembly of Mennonite World Conference (MWC). The meetings were not easy. Relations between German and Dutch delegates traveling together on the trans-Atlantic voyage were tense. But early in the deliberations, Dirk Cattepoel, a German pastor from Krefeld, appealed to his Dutch, French and American counterparts for forgiveness and, "in the name of Christ, [for] a new beginning of Christian brotherliness." And by all accounts, the meetings ended with powerful gestures of reconciliation and a new commitment to work together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The meetings ended with powerful gestures of reconciliation and a new commitment to work together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The MWC assembly in August 1948 provided a framework for true ecclesial transformation. It helped the Anabaptist-Mennonite family reorient its understanding of geopolitics and the church; for those who were willing, it reframed how they thought about the world.

On Jan. 1, the offices of MWC officially completed a move from Strasbourg, France, to Bogotá, Colombia. At stake in the transition is much more than a new postal address. Since its beginnings in 1925, MWC had been dominated by European and North American groups. Yet dramatic changes have been unfolding in our fellowship. During the past 30 years, MWC's center of gravity has shifted decisively from north to south—today, more than two-thirds of our members live in the southern hemisphere. (Indeed, Mennonite Church USA now accounts for merely 6 percent of the total Anabaptist-Mennonite family.)

Throughout his long tenure as general secretary of MWC, Larry Miller has been attentive to this transformation. It was thanks largely to his vision that the most recent MWC assemblies have taken place in India (1997), Zimbabwe (2003) and Paraguay (2009). Now, as leadership of MWC shifts to a new general secretary—César García of Bogotá—it is fitting that MWC headquarters move as well. García is a first-generation Anabaptist, attracted to the holistic gospel of the tradition. As a leader of the Mennonite Brethren conference in Colombia, he actively promoted closer relations with the Mennonite church and Brethren in Christ there, helping overcome some of the divisions that lingered from the missionary era. He is a person of conviction yet gentle in spirit and committed to a shared style of leadership. García embodies the new face of our global fellowship.

On Jan. 21, the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition celebrated its 487th birthday. As a professor of history at a Mennonite college, I have come to know and love the Anabaptist story. And for most of my career, I told a familiar narrative: a story that began with the first baptisms in Zurich, Switzerland, spread through Europe, crossed the Atlantic to North America, and culminated with us. In recent years, however, I have set myself the task of telling that story in a new way. What if what God had in mind from the beginning of the movement, with the first baptisms on Jan. 21, 1525, was not Mennonite Church USA but the 1.7 million Anabaptist-Mennonites around the globe? How would we need to tell our history differently if this was where God's narrative was heading all along? I look forward to sorting out that story in the coming decades.

In the meantime, hold César García, the new MWC offices in Bogotá and the global Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship in your prayers. Sixty years after the gatherings in Goshen and North Newton, MWC still offers the possibility of reorienting our thinking and transforming the way we look at the world. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

How to be smarter (but without shortcuts)

You can debate what "smarter" even means. In an age of proliferating amounts of information available to people at the touch of their computer key, people aren't necessarily more intelligent. They don't always think more critically or act reasonably.

One of the exciting frontiers in research these days is that of the human brain. Sharon Begley has summarized some of that research in popular form for her article "Buff Your Brain: Want to Be Smarter in Work, Love and Life?" in *Newsweek* (Jan. 9 and 16).

As Begley dug through the latest research in neurobiology and cognitive science, she writes, "one discovery from 2011 … stood out above all others: that IQ, long thought to be largely unchangeable after early childhood, can in fact be raised." And the change can be up to 21 points in four years.

IQ, which is "measured by a battery of tests of working memory, spatial skills and pattern recognition, among others, captures a wide range of cognitive skills, from spatial to verbal to analytical and beyond," writes Begley. Raising it 20 points is significant, says cognitive scientist Cathy Price of University College in London. This reveals the brain's capacity to change—a property called neuroplasticity—and to create new neurons well into one's 60s and 70s.

One finding of this research is that "refining your sensory-motor skills can bolster cognitive ones," writes Begley. No one knows why, "but it may be that the two brain systems are more interconnected than we realize." This means that learning to knit or juggle or listening to classical music may raise your IQ.

To raise it 20 points, however, requires "intensive training," says neuroscientist Eric Kandel of Columbia University. There is no quick brain fix.

Nevertheless, while improving your brain takes work, there are some accessible ways to do it. For example, writes Begley, "walking 30 minutes a day five times a week stimulates production of BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor), a molecule that nurtures the creation of the new neurons and synapses that underlie learning."

A midday nap can also raise your brain power. And if you don't get a nap in, your brain will carve out its own downtime through brain activity that takes place when you're daydreaming.

For other ways to improve one's brain power, see the list below. Better yet, check out the full list in *Newsweek* of 31 ways, with explanations of each. Some will surprise you, such as "join a knitting circle" (#12), "play violent videogames" (#14), "write by hand" (#24) or "get out of town" (#31).

The strategy with the strongest evidence behind it, though, is #10: learn a second language. Begley explains that "the workout [the brain] gets in bilingualism carries over, buffing such IQ-building skills as problem solving and attention switching." She adds that such a workout "seems to postpone dementia by five years."

Being smarter is up to us. But it does require some work.—*Gordon Houser*

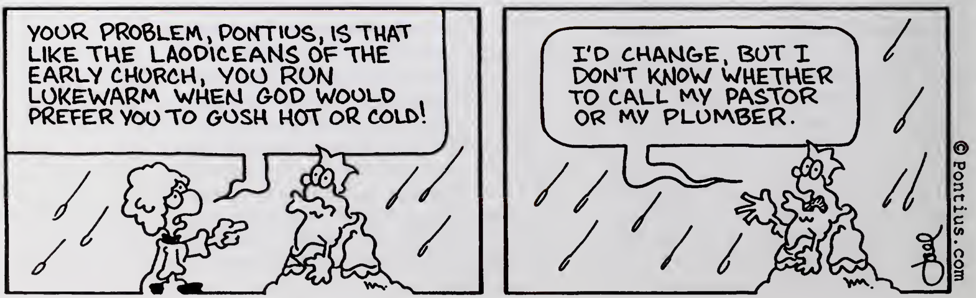
10 ways (out of 31) to get smarter

1. **Play words with friends**
2. **Eat turmeric**
3. **Take Tae Kwon Do**
4. **Get news from Al Jazeera**
5. **Toss your smartphone**
6. **Sleep. A lot.**
7. **Download the TED app**
8. **Go to a literary festival**
9. **Build a 'memory palace'**
10. **Learn a language**

—*Newsweek*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


YOUR PROBLEM, PONTIUS, IS THAT LIKE THE LAODICEANS OF THE EARLY CHURCH, YOU RUN LUKEWARM WHEN GOD WOULD PREFER YOU TO GUSH HOT OR COLD!
I'D CHANGE, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO CALL MY PASTOR OR MY PLUMBER.
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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

"U.S. congressmen should have to dress like Nascar drivers and wear the logos of all the banks, investment banks, insurance companies and real estate firms that they're taking money from."—Thomas L. Friedman in the *New York Times*

Regrets at the end of one's life

Bonnie Ware has long worked in palliative care, spending time with the dying during the final weeks of their lives. Over the years she's heard the same regrets from the dying. They wish they had the courage to be themselves rather than trying to meet the expectations of others. They say they should not have worked so hard—a lament heard especially from the older generation of males. They regret not having had the courage to express their feelings, even if doing so would have caused others pain. They say they should have stayed in touch with their friends and given more time to nurturing friendships.
—*Christian Century*

$2.3 billion

Amount the financial services industry, including real estate, spent on federal campaign contributions from 1990 to 2010, which was more than the health care, energy, defense, agriculture and transportation industries combined, according to one consumer group using information from Opensecrets.org.

Manure matters: the dynamics of dung

Researchers at Mississippi State University (working with pandas) and at the Dutch technology company DSM (working with elephants) say that the feces of the two species contain bacteria that could be key to producing cellulosic ethanol from biomass such as wood chips, switchgrass and corn stover.

Putrefying ponds of hog excrement are one of the nation's fastest-growing sources of methane, a greenhouse gas 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Now Duke University and Duke Energy have teamed up to harness pig-poop power, using the methane from a hog farm to run an electrical turbine. The project produces enough electricity to power 35 homes.

Dried flakes of human waste fuel Thames Water, Britain's largest water and sewage company. Once dry and powdery, the waste can be burned, providing 16 percent of the utility's energy and reducing its carbon footprint by 550 tons a year.—*Dashka Slater in* Sierra

1 in 15

of all the humans who have ever lived is alive today.
—*Sierra*

Rabbis in solidarity with burned mosque

More than 1,000 rabbis from around the world have signed a statement denouncing the burning of an Israeli mosque as police arrested a suspect who is alleged to be a Jewish extremist. "We condemn those in Israel who exacerbate conflict and strife and who insist that only one people or religion belongs to this land," says a statement organizers say was overwhelmingly signed by U.S. rabbis.—*Religion News Service*

Adults ages 45 to 84 who attend religious services or other organized religious activities weekly are

62%

more likely to be obese than those who never participate. (Another study found a 45 percent greater risk.)
—*Christianity Today*

Feds indict Amish sect

Federal prosecutors have expanded their case against members of a breakaway Amish sect in Ohio for their roles in shaving the hair and beards of people considered to be their religious enemies. An indictment issued on Dec. 20, 2011, in the U.S. District Court in Cleveland lists 12 suspects, including the sect's leader, Samuel Mullet, 66.—*Religion News Service*

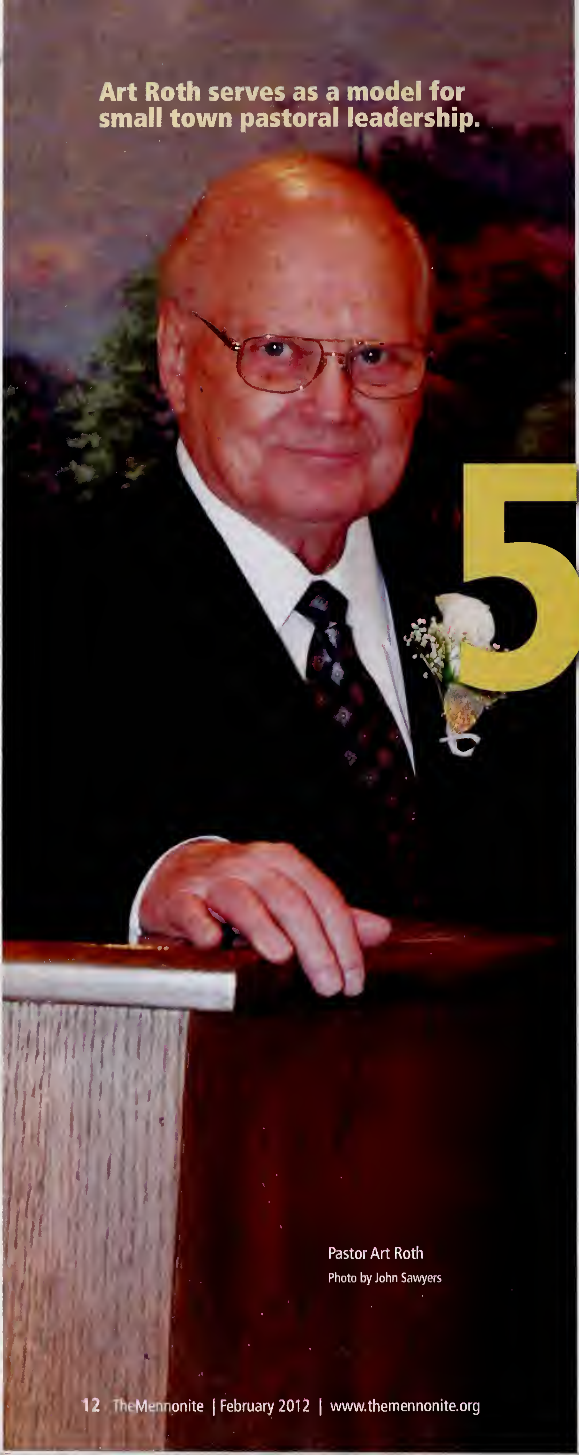
Top 10 charitable nations

Based on a scale that weighed monetary donations, volunteer work and willingness to help out a stranger.

1. **United States**
2. **Ireland**
3. **Australia**
4. **New Zealand**
5. **Great Britain**
6. **the Netherlands**
7. **Canada**
8. **Sri Lanka**
9. **Thailand**
10. **Laos.**

At the bottom of the list: China, Russia and India.—*World Giving Index*

Art Roth serves as a model for small town pastoral leadership.

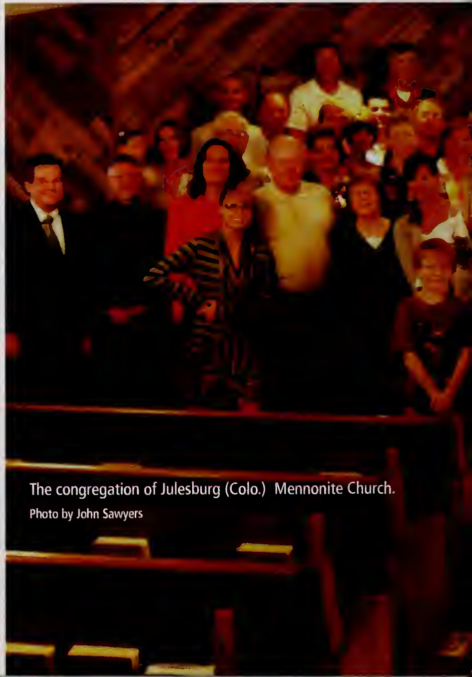


Pastor Art Roth
Photo by John Sawyers

Fifty years of continuous pastoral ministry at one Mennonite congregation must set a modern pastor longevity record. But length of faithful service is only one of the unique characteristics of Arthur Roth, pastor of Julesburg (Colo.) Mennonite Church, a member of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

50 years as pastor

by Larry Hauder



The congregation of Julesburg (Colo.) Mennonite Church.
Photo by John Sawyers

"Art," as the local coffee shop crowd and close friends call him, has grown into this small community's town pastor. Yes, there are a variety of other denominations and pastors in Julesburg, but Art brings a sense of longevity and stability to the role. He's one of the locals. After all, he's more than a professional pastor; he's a "tentmaking" (Acts 18:3), bivocational pastor. He's managed a furniture store, owned his own floor- and wall-covering business, worked as the groundskeeper for the county courthouse and continues to assist at the local funeral home.

As a volunteer, he managed the county's first responder ambulance crew for 25 years. He has witnessed this community's 1,200-person population go through its various phases of life and death drama. The result is a strong loyalty among the townspeople.

His role is best evidenced in the coffee shop where the local farmers, shopkeepers and retirees gather daily to share stories and talk about the weather. When Art walks in to take his well-worn seat at the table, more than likely someone will begin with a goodhearted pastor joke, with Art laughing alongside the others, then asking how the storyteller's mother is doing in the nursing home.

When many rural congregations are struggling to survive because of declining and aging populations, Art has managed to lead the Julesburg Mennonite Church through two building phases and another expansion remodel is in discussion. What can be learned from his model of pastoral leadership?

It's only with time and relationship skills that a small-town pastor can be part of new stories yet to be told.

Relationships matter. People understand that Art genuinely cares for them. That caring spirit was most evident when I was turning 18 and fearful of the military draft board interview. Art went with me to the draft board to make my claim as a conscientious objector. That same relational quality continues. Last year, a 57-year-old, non-churchgoing man with terminal cancer invited Art to his house and asked if he would baptize him. Two weeks later, Art officiated at this man's funeral, one of more than 500 funerals he has performed during his 50-year ministry.

Long-term pastorates are important. Relationships that build high trust and friendships like

this take time. It's the same reason mission agencies prefer long-term overseas workers to short-term volunteers. Small towns have a culture and story narrative that is not easy to break into. It's only with time and relationship skills that a small-town pastor can be part of new stories yet to be told.

A vision for the future is necessary. Art's idea of the church is expansive. He has always imagined the local congregation to be inclusive. Today, few ethnic Mennonite names are listed in the membership roster. His inclusive vision was honed as long-term staffer for the Ohio Christian Layman Tent Crusades. He knows the power of evangelism. Whenever the Julesburg Mennonite Church building felt cramped or was not adequate for ministry, he sketched a new building plan that would accommodate growth. And each time the congregation responded to his expansive vision.

Art's combination of directive leadership and compassionate relationships provides security and inspires others to follow.

Strong leadership inspires others. Art has never shied away from taking charge. Whether it's the season of Advent or Easter, the sanctuary will show the colors and themes through his creative sanctuary decorations. For many Mennonite pastors schooled in the "priesthood of all believers" doctrine, Art's style of leadership may be viewed as management by executive order. But the combination of directive leadership and compassionate relationships provides security and inspires others to follow.

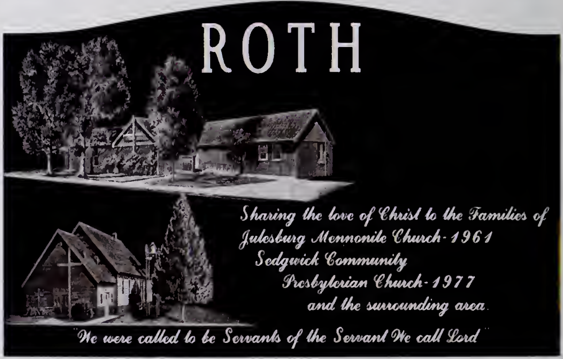
A positive message that leads toward a goal is more effective than preaching for or against an issue. I have never heard Art publicly criticize the Mennonite church. In fact, he has perfected the skill of harvesting positive messages from Mennonite periodicals and reprinting them in his monthly newsletter. When the denomination debates human sexuality or abortion, he chooses to tell denominational stories of mission enterprise and individual spiritual accomplishment.

A supportive family makes a positive impact. Marjorie Miller Roth has been an active partner in Art's ministry. Like Art, greeting the locals she meets on her daily walks around town and in the savings and loan where she's been employed for 20-plus years is true friendship evangelism. When Marjorie stops on her walk to congratulate a new mother, one can sense the genuine caring spirit, and people respond.

As a child of this congregation and a recipient of pastor Art's friendship, I observe with more than a passing interest how his ministry has evolved. He offers to the broader church a model of leadership and commitment to the small town that deserves pause and recognition.

Larry Hauder is a member of Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship in Boise, Idaho, and on the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board..

Since 1977, Art Roth has been driving 14 miles to Sedgwick, Colo. (population 414), every Sunday, preaching at a small Presbyterian Church prior to making it back to Julesburg to preach. He has a clergy credential from the Presbyterians that allows him to function as a pastor in this congregation.


ROTH
Sharing the love of Christ to the Families of
Julesburg Mennonite Church - 1961
Sedgwick Community
Presbyterian Church - 1977
and the surrounding area.
"We were called to be Servants of the Servant We call Lord"

The Roth family headstone, which Art designed. Photo by John Sawyers

What does the Bible teach about Sabbath and retirement?

Is retirement biblical?

I'm most surprised by how many of my friends or acquaintances have reflected the decided opinion that retirement is not biblical.

by Freeman Miller

Since I officially retired from my bishop oversight duties and college teaching a few years back, I have had the strange pleasure and puzzlement of hearing a variety of responses to that news. Some have said such reassuring things as, "You certainly deserve it" or, "This is a long-overdue rest." Others have said, "You look too young to retire" or, "I never thought of you retiring" or, "I can't picture you sitting around doing nothing." But I'm most surprised by how many of my friends or acquaintances have reflected the decided opinion that retirement is not biblical.

One older church leader from another community asked bluntly, "Where in the Bible do you read about retirement?" Some of the younger generation have opined that mine may be the last generation of Americans that can afford to retire. They may be right.

Let me clarify up front that I wholly agree with many of my sincere church friends who say that one never retires from serving the Lord. I can also appreciate many of our Asian American pastors' conviction that when called by God to serve the church, one must give one's all without reservation. However, I don't take this conviction to the same extreme as some of them, insisting that only full-time, fully trained and fully supported people can be ordained to the ministry and must serve for life. Neither do I share some of my black pastor friends' staunch position that white pastors can burn out, but black pastors simply burn up. (One pastor actually died of a heart attack in the pulpit.) This view reminds me of my grandfather, who was an Old Order Amish preacher. I remember him often saying when I was a young boy, "I would much rather die with my boots on than rust out in my rocking chair." (He was also a semi-retired farmer who still helped my dad around the farm in addition to regular preaching as long as he was able.)

But these many reactions have caused me to do some soul searching. Also, I have searched the Scriptures more diligently to see what God might say about retirement. I have tried to pay special attention to themes recurring in the sacred pages, more than simple proof texts—bumper sticker verses plucked from Proverbs or other wisdom texts.

The effects of aging are well documented today but seldom applied to the effectiveness of church leadership.

Most of us grew up memorizing verses about persevering to the end, about putting our hands to the plow and not looking back and about pressing on for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Mennonites are especially fond of quoting the refrain that we are called to be faithful, not necessarily successful (this often comes up when discussing evangelism and church growth). We also often spiritualize clear teachings of Scripture instead of obeying them literally. ("My whole life is a prayer.")

Imagine my surprise when I came upon this clear passage while reading through the Bible, this time from Peterson's *The Message*:

"God spoke to Moses: 'These are your instructions regarding the Levites: At the age of 25 they will join the work force in the Tent of Meeting; at the age of 50 they must retire from the work. They can assist their brothers in the tasks in the Tent of Meeting, but they are not permitted to do the actual work themselves. These are the ground rules for the work of the Levites' " (Numbers 8:23-26).

Mandatory retirement at age 50? "Ground rules" for the work of God's church leaders? This is obviously much more than a casual suggestion; this is the word of the Lord for the work of the Lord. Why had I never heard any sermons or read any Christian self-help books on this passage? I wondered if Peterson took some "dynamic equivalence" liberties and read his favorite bias into this text, so I checked it against other translations and discovered that the translation is rock solid. The NIV Study Bible has a footnote observing that in Numbers 4:3 the age window for serving in the temple is 30-50 and that the rabbis suggest there was a five-year apprenticeship before full levitical service was taken on. (It also notes, perhaps wryly, that by the time of the monarchy, King David reduced the age of initiation to 20 to match the changing demands on the Levites. [See 1 Chronicles 23, especially vv. 24-27.])

This discovery triggered a whole new line of reflection for me. It was at once obvious that these passages about the Levites were focused on official leadership structures among God's faith community—the people of Israel. God clearly spelled out job descriptions and duties for leaders in the tabernacle (later the temple) system of worship. While general laws and precepts applied to all Israelites, God spelled out a system of special rules for the leaders.

It occurred to me that most of the memory verses I alluded to above apply to all believers. Might God have some special instructions for church leaders today? And why this age restriction? Do leaders lose their leadership abilities after a certain age? Or are those skills dulled over time, raising the need for fresh recruits at all times?

The effects of aging are well documented today but seldom applied to the effectiveness of church leadership. I have heard far too many laments about aging leaders who refused to let go and turn over their duties to younger leaders. If God's preferred retirement age of 50 were enforced for all pastors today, what difference might it make in the church? (Save your hate mail; I'm not ready to draw categorical conclusions on this question, just raising a different perspective.) Perhaps we need to rethink our ecclesiology.

This raises a host of related issues: How does our view of retirement relate to the Protestant work ethic? To the American ideal of leisure and pleasure? To the whole notion of serving God as vocation? To the ideal of discipleship? (Paul's instructions to Timothy to entrust Paul's teachings to younger leaders who will teach others, for example (2 Timothy 2:2) To workaholism? To the current lottery craze and the illusion that one can "get rich quick" and never have to work again? Should we absolutize Paul's admonition, "He who does not work should not eat," even for retired people? And how do Old Testament instructions apply in New Testament situations? Does progressive revelation point to new models for NT leaders, models that make OT standards obsolete? And are there different retirement standards for leaders and for nonleaders? (Or does Jesus see all his followers as becoming leaders? "Follow me, and I will make you recruiters.")

A verse I have pondered often after years of various leadership positions in the church is Acts 20:28, "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son." I am especially challenged with a morning prayer connected to that verse that I have long carried in my Bible: "I know that I must take care of myself if I am to be of any use to those I am called to serve. Grant me grace to walk in health and wholeness this day."

Surely "health and wholeness" include regular times of prayer, reflection, retreat and renewal. Knowing when to speak and when to listen. Keeping the inner springs of living water flowing so that I have something to offer to the thirsts around me. Learning the discipleship art of training younger leaders, delegating real ministries to them and releasing them to serve. Knowing when to retire.

This leads me to the important subject of Sabbath and sabbaticals. Pastors today need regular Sabbaths and sabbaticals. Few public positions are higher stress and higher risk than the position of pastor. This is well-documented in the health-care community. But somehow we have internalized the fiction that pastors must be on call 24/7, never sleep and never get sick.

Even God rested after creating the universe, and he commanded us to rest regularly as well. But today's church often drives us harder than our workplaces. The priests serving in the temple had their allotted times and duties, which is why the angel knew exactly where to find Zechariah—and when—to announce the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1).

Jesus regularly got away from the crowds, often escaping to the mountains to pray, to maintain focus for the many pressures of his ministry. And he commanded the disciples to "come apart and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31), since they were too busy with ministry even to eat. (Someone quipped about this verse, "Either you regularly come apart and rest, or you simply come apart.")

The word Sabbath is simply the Hebrew word for "stop" or "rest." We all need to have regular times of rest to remain at our best. And God gave us the gift of the Sabbath to remind us that our Creator and Sustainer takes care of us. We do not need to kill ourselves with constant work. God took care of the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. (Even when they had no work, God commanded them to keep the Sabbath and not even gather manna on the seventh day.) Judeo-Christian principles in Scripture undergird the idea of days off, vacation, recreation, sabbaticals and retirement. Whoever gave us the idea that pastors should be superheroes, never needing time off or sleep or Nyquil, needs to reread their Bibles.

We have internalized the fiction that pastors must be on call 24/7, never sleep and never get sick.

The Sabbath principle was instituted for all God's people, not only God's leaders. After all, leaders are to model and teach principles that apply to all God's people, to "equip the saints for the work of ministry," as Paul puts it in Ephesians. The pastor should be able to say, with Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ," even into retirement. All of us, from the president to the principal to the pencil pusher to the parent, need regular times off, the "seasons of refreshing" promised by God to us. And retirement can be the most refreshing of all, as it releases us to focus our energies into special ministries of "assisting" those younger leaders who benefit hugely from the service of seasoned volunteers or part-time employees. And here I agree with my Grandpa Joe: I don't plan simply to sit on a rocker and rust away. I can seize fresh opportunities to serve, just without all the high stress and responsibility.

Carpe diem.

Freeman Miller is a retired bishop who lives in Philadelphia and attends Oxford Circle Mennonite Church.

God heals today

by Judy Ann Eichstedt

A miracle story of healing

It was October 1989 when Peter, one of my six children, came to me complaining about his leg hurting. He was then only 14 and never seemed to get sick, but I could see he was in a lot of pain. I examined his knee and found a strange lump I knew had not been there before. At first I worried about what this lump was on his knee. I called the doctor and got an appointment the next day. ▶

The next two weeks seemed to pass so slowly I it felt like a nightmare. First there were tests after test, then the waiting around for results. I did not think I could make it. Peter, however, leaned on his faith and refused to worry or even be concerned about it. I was proud of him. Every night he read his Bible before bedtime, then thanked God for healing him. I was amazed at his strong belief in God.

Then without warning the doctor came into the room where I waited for the test results. He wore a sad face. I knew it was not good news. He said he'd talked to other doctors and they all agreed that Peter had bone cancer.

I sat there in shock as he handed me a clipboard and asked me to sign papers to remove Peter's leg. I trembled and felt sick to my stomach. I said, "He's only 14."

"It's important we do this quickly," the doctor said.

"No," I screamed, "you're wrong." I threw the clipboard back at the doctor and ran out of the room. I jumped in my car with tears running down my face and drove home.

All my children were at school, and I was alone with my fear. I walked through the house crying and shaking. I screamed, "No, no, no," then prayed as I never have prayed before.

What happened next is unbelievable, and if it had not happened to me I would not believe it possible. On the floor I saw a bright light that seemed to cover me completely. I was no longer crying but completely calm. I ran my hand over the light and looked up to see where it came from, but it was too bright. I was at peace, as if nothing was wrong at all. Never in all my life had I ever felt so secure and loved. It was more wonderful then words could describe. It was as if every care and worry, every pain and grief had disappeared. In spite of how bright the light was it did not hurt my eyes. I don't know how long it lasted, but I wanted to remain there forever. I remember as if it were yesterday how in my heart I knew Peter was going to be OK and not lose his leg. Did I hear a voice or was it a knowing? I can't be sure. All I know is that I was convinced without a doubt that Peter would be fine.

When it was over and the light had vanished, I was grateful for what had happened yet longed for the light to come back. I slowly got up from the floor and made it to the kitchen. Then I heard my kids coming in from school. I went over to Peter and told him, "I can't explain it, son, but you will be well."

I explained to him a short time later what happened that day. He smiled and said, "I know, Mom, because God spoke to my heart. That's why I'm not scared at all." His faith amazed me.

Within the week we were off to Kansas City, Mo., where a biopsy had to be done. If it was cancer, they wanted to remove the leg. I told the doctor I believed it would not be cancer at all. He looked at me a bit funny and more than likely thought I was just being a mother who could not accept what was happening.

> "No," I screamed, "you're wrong." I threw the clipboard back at the doctor and ran out of the room. I jumped in my car with tears running down my face and drove home.

As we waited for the results, there were times to doubt, yet my son and I leaned on our faith and refused to accept doubt into our hearts. We spent days in the hospital's cancer ward before the doctor walked into the room smiling. "It's not cancer," he said. He said the bone required shaving but would not trouble him again. I hugged him and thanked him but not before I said thank you to my heavenly father.

As Peter packed up his belongings and we waited to be released from the hospital, we knelt at the side of the bed and again thanked God for healing Peter. I knew God had healed him because seven doctors in Tulsa had test results that said he had cancer, yet he did not.

Peter is grown up now with a family of his own and still reflects on that time when God healed him. I have not had that happen to me again, but in moments when I am troubled and scared I play it all over in my mind, and a peace comes over me. I just know that God heals today and is watching over us all no matter who we are or where we are. God loves us all.

Judy Ann Eichstedt lives in Tulsa, Okla.

A church on the move

by Carl Hansen

The Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia has shown great growth.

Delegates at the 2010 assembly of the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia. Photo provided

Back in 1967, when Vera and I first arrived in Ethiopia, we found a committed core of 13 Eastern Mennonite Mission (EMM) couples and 12 single missionaries engaged in two mission-founded hospitals, a major Christian bookstore, a few elementary schools, a boarding high school and a Christian publishing company. The emergence of an autonomous Meserete Kristos Church of 600 members organized into five congregations was a calculated byproduct of their unrelenting efforts at living as Christian servants where proselytizing was strictly forbidden.

Forty-four years later, Vera and I are the last of a genre of EMM workers in Ethiopia. The others have long since gone. Their byproduct remains, like seeds well planted, in the vibrant life of a vigorous church on the move that now numbers 591 congregations and 863 church-planting centers composed of 205,508 baptized members in a total faith community of 389,492. This past year alone 17,345 people were baptized.

The Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) is organized into 27 regions spread throughout a country of 80 million (about the size of Ontario, or twice the size of Texas). Each region has its own regional office that coordinates the ministries of its outlying congregations. These include evangelism and outreach programs, pastoral care and leadership concerns, grass-roots religious educational programs and stewardship concerns.

The MKC central office in Addis Ababa gives general oversight to all 27 regions and administers special programs in collaboration with the regions. Those programs include education, evangelism and missions, translation and production of important materials into local languages, peace and reconciliation, prison ministries, women's ministry, and relief and development.

The ministry of the Meserete Kristos Church is focused around six basic commitments. First and foremost, the Meserete Kristos Church is committed to be **a witnessing church**. It continues to make the Great Commission its primary calling. Its Evangelism and Missions Department encourages congregations to reach out and establish "daughter" congregations. It supports 386 missionaries/church planters. It collaborates with regional offices and congregations in supporting 252 church planters, sharing salary costs at 75 percent the first year, 50 percent the second year and 25 percent the third year. It provides full support for 109 missionaries to work within the country in places where there is no church. It also encourages 25 local church planters who support themselves. The department also gives short training to 100 international "tentmaking" missionaries who take jobs in neighboring countries. Some of these are quasi-clandestine operations, the details of which are kept secret due to security reasons.

Second, MKC is committed to be **a teaching church.** Since it was born in the nest of missionary-founded Bible schools and elementary schools and the Nazareth Bible Academy, the church remains committed to biblically based education.

Even during the days of Marxist persecution, when all those institutions were lost, secret home-cell churches were nourished by carefully prepared lesson guides to their Bible studies.

Since 1994, to safeguard and consolidate and unite its leadership in a commonly held Anabaptist theological stance, MKC has developed the Meserete Kristos College as its national college, which now offers baccalaureate as well as diploma programs in Bible and Christian ministry. With financial support from hundreds of partners in the first world, the college has provided scholarships for more than 100 evangelists and pastors. It has already graduated 474 people from its various programs, leaders who already make a huge difference in their churches and communities.

Also, in collaboration with Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., the college offers graduate studies to 25 leaders who have earlier completed first degrees. Professors teach intensive courses each summer. The 25 students sacrifice their annual vacations from their places of service to advance their knowledge and skills through this disciplined summer study.

Further, seven of the more mature Regional Offices have launched local Bible Institutes offering Bible & ministry training on the post secondary diploma level to several hundred local leaders on weekends. Curriculum and qualifications of teachers are monitored by the Meserete Kristos College at Debre Zeit which grants the diploma and of which most of the teachers are graduates.

Third, MKC is committed to be **a giving church.** Although in one of the poorest countries in the world, all members are expected to bring a tithe of their income, no matter how small, to their local church office. Members also bring offerings to worship services on Sundays. Yet with the majority of members students or youth not yet employed, and those few fortunate enough to have jobs receiving low wages, church income is still small. A tithe of a little is little indeed.

> Although in one of the poorest countries in the world, all members are expected to bring a tithe of their income, no matter how small, to their local church office.

With the annual income from all tithes and offerings from congregations this past year, the churches support 1,439 full-time ministers (pastors, evangelists, missionaries and teachers) and 1,282 support staff, pay administrative expenses and build or improve church facilities. Funds from outside help support some of the 386 missionaries and church planters.

Poverty is felt in the case of MKC leadership deciding to build a five-story central office building in Addis Ababa to house its head office with the intention of renting out several floors to generate income to assist its ongoing ministries. It will take many years to complete what could be completed in one year, were $1 million available. Congregations building houses of worship face the same dilemma as they commit themselves to build as money becomes available.

Fourth, the Meserete Kristos Church is committed to be **a compassionate church.** It engages in a holistic ministry to a society in great need. Its Relief and Development Association (MKC-RDA) operates as a semiautonomous branch of the head office, administers more than 65 projects to alleviate poverty (famine relief, food security, child and youth development, HIV-AIDS-related ministries, and conflict management and peace building). It employs more than 300 people and has an annual budget of $3.7 million supplied

▶

Pastor Frew Zena gives the keynote address at the 2010 assembly of the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia. Photo provided

by international nongovernment agencies such as Mennonite Central Committee and others.

RDA's vision is for "a poverty-free and transformed Ethiopian society where economic, social and spiritual needs are met and sustained for successive generations." Its mission is "to glorify God by addressing basic and spiritual needs of rural and urban communities in a sustainable manner through tackling the root causes of poverty."

RDA is committed to working with and empowering local communities to feed the hungry and destitute through famine relief and food or cash-for-work programs; to improve food security by soil enrichment and conservation through composting, terrace building and tree planting; to improve community health through basic education, protecting water sources, teaching sanitation and the use of latrines, and improving nutrition; to reduce the prevalence and spread of HIV-AIDS through education and providing medications and assistance to its victims; to provide educational opportunities through the creation or improvement of schools for the children and providing functional adult literacy programs; to enable the poorest children to get primary and secondary education through child sponsorship projects administered by local congregations and funded by international nongovernment organizations such as World Vision, Compassion International and others; to promote the development of self-help groups among the most destitute and marginalized population, especially among women and the disabled; and to encourage harmonious living within the community through peace building and conflict resolution training and promoting restorative justice practices.

> God has used the teaching on peace and justice and reconciliation to address revenge killing.

Fifth, MKC is committed to **visiting those in prison.** Its prison ministry began in 1993, when prisoners at Jimma read MKC's magazine, *Miskir* (*Witness*) and wrote to the church for help. Today, MKC's prison ministry works in 40 of the nation's 125 prisons. This ministry follows a holistic approach, meeting spiritual and humanitarian needs. In 15 prisons they have placed full-time ministers who evangelize, teach, counsel, lead Bible studies, give discipleship training and lead the congregations that have formed in the prisons. In 25 prisons, the ministry serves by regular visitation, counseling, giving discipleship training, supplying Bibles, tracts, magazines, books, newspapers and distributing used clothing. In some prisons the ministry builds latrines, dormitories for women and their dependent small children, and even chapels for worship. It also establishes kindergartens for the children who live with their incarcerated mothers. Congregations have emerged in most of these prisons. In some of the prisons more than one half of the prisoners are now committed Christians.

Many prisoners are enrolled in biblical courses through distance education on the certificate level. Last year alone, 30 prisoners graduated with certificates.

The MKC Prison Ministry's goal is to bring transformation in the lives of prisoners mentally, spiritually, ethically, physically and socially. It hopes to see criminals transformed to become productive citizens committed to promoting peace and justice in their communities and to reduce and prevent crime in Ethiopia. It seeks to give a practical education to all prisoners in areas such as work ethics, government and citizenship responsibilities, human rights, mental health, children's physical and mental development and the role of parents, HIV-AIDS awareness and prevention, peace and justice and reconciliation, and forgiveness as an alternative to revenge killing.

In some northern Ethiopian regions, because of the cultural practice of revenge killing, men in the community feel compelled to take revenge when a loved one is murdered and because of "honor" become "murderers." In some prisons, up to two-thirds of the prisoners are "murderers."

Since 2007, God has used the teaching on peace and justice and reconciliation to address this problem. Some regional government officials have asked MKC's Prison Ministry and its Peace Office to bring this teaching from the prisons to their local community elders, religious leaders (both Ethiopian Orthodox and Muslim), law enforcement and judicial officials, and government officials. Consequently, in these northern regions, where the name "Meserete Kristos Church" was hated and opposed as "an evil, dangerous alien religion," it is now welcomed because of its teaching on peace and restorative justice and reconciliation, a teaching seen as the key to the prevention of crime, especially revenge killing.

Even though the MKC Prison Ministry has an annual budget of $35,360 and only four full-time workers in the head office and 15 full-time ministers, it is active in 40 prisons. The constraint in resources is a huge challenge. The current budget is met by private donations and special offerings of willing congregations. But expansion of the work to the other 85 prisons requires an expansion of resources.

And finally, MKC is committed to be **a peacemaking church.** Its holistic concept of the church's ministry includes one of reconciliation between the individual and God and between one another as well as working for peace in a society torn by conflict. Its Peace Ministry was begun in 2005 as a positive byproduct of an internal church conflict that started in 2002 and ended in 2003. As a result of the conflict, MKC leaders became more aware of the fragility of unity and the dangers and possibilities for disaster that conflict can bring to an otherwise healthy church. Fortunately, by God's grace, the conflict was resolved through internal mediation. This became a lesson that made the leadership receptive to the idea of establishing a Peace Ministry.

The first responsibility of the Peace Ministry was to create awareness throughout the denomination's leadership of the centrality and importance of living together in peace and harmony, the possibility of viewing conflict as a potentially positive growth factor and learning the techniques of transforming conflict into a resolution that brings health and positive growth to personal and institutional relationships.

The leadership began with peacebuilding seminars and retreats, first with about 80 key leaders from all over the country, then holding a peace conference for more than 500 delegates to the 2006 General Assembly of MKC, with Carl Stauffer as guest peace facilitator. Mennonite Central Committee Ethiopia also assisted by sending 11 peace change agents to be trained at Africa Peace Institute in Zambia. In addition, 50 key leaders from different ministries in the church have been trained in stress and trauma healing. Further, 50 key leaders from different regions and the MKC head office have been trained in managing group dynamics.

Since that time, the Peace Office has prepared training manuals for peace committee membership and for conflict transformation and peacebuilding, restorative justice, stress and trauma healing, and HIV-AIDS awareness. With these preparations and materials, the Peace Ministry is gearing up to transform MKC into a true historic peace church.

In some northern Ethiopian regions ... men in the community feel compelled to take revenge when a loved one is murdered and because of 'honor' become 'murderers.'

MKC is also contributing to the promotion of peacemaking as an integral part of the Christian ministry by offering a peace minor with its bachelor's degree in Bible and Christian ministries. This has become popular with students. A new teacher, Fekadu Negussie, having just graduated with a master's degree in peace studies from Fresno (Calif.) Pacific University, has joined the teaching faculty to strengthen this emphasis.

As one especially privileged to look back and remember the small fledgling church of 44 years ago and see its vigorous and determined growth and its increasing impact on the society, we can joyously marvel how MKC is truly a church on the move. One can only speculate and pray that the momentum will continue and increase until the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge and the glory of God.

Carl and Vera Hansen serve as volunteers at Meserete Kristos College in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Vera works in the college as librarian, and Carl is a lecturer and director of college advancement. They are members of Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church.

The gospel of peace to all creation

by Matthew Eaton

When I meet new people and tell them that I am from New York, most assume that I grew up alongside of the millions of people in the city itself. I quickly correct this assumption by clarifying that I am from northern New York, in a city called Watertown, about 300 miles north of the most populous city in the United States. ▶

Broadening the Anabaptist vision toward the care of animals

Northern New York is largely covered in forests, small lakes and the Adirondack mountain range; a far cry from a city that is home to over 8 million people. It seems clear to me now that it was this geographical context with its low human population and rich natural expanses that allowed me to develop a strong bond to creation from an early age. Though not raised a Mennonite, this love of creation will greatly affect my life years later when the Anabaptist vision of peace awakens in my heart. As a child I live outside the city of Watertown, with easy access to thickly forested areas and abundant wildlife. I love being in the woods; it's quiet, no one can bother me, and it's home to many animals, all of whom captivate my imagination. I spend hours in the woods listening to birds, watching fish in small ponds and delighting in the squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits and deer that populate our back yard. I also live in a house that is always home to companion animals. Cats are the pet of choice at home, but there are also dogs, rabbits, assorted rodents, birds, turtles, fish and even snakes. Animals are my perpetual companions throughout childhood. They are part of my family and deserve compassion and respect as much as humans. At no point are animals outside my moral sphere. The compassion and respect that I learn as a child are never relegated to the human world only.

Fast forward from my childhood to seminary life. I began coursework at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and adopted my first two cats, Julio and Fargo. For three years I read and wrote theology with these two always in my presence. Though academic life is not exactly exciting, Julio and Fargo seem to enjoy it, as they rarely leave my side. During this time, I come to know my new friends thoroughly and learn that they share many "human" characteristics with me. I see joy and excitement when Julio begs to be let outside to explore the back yard and bathe in the sun. I see contentment and a love of companionship as Fargo sleeps away the days as close to me as he can get. I see frustration when the two want to sit in the same spot, anger when one tries to take a larger share of the food, fear in the face of new situations, and the discontent of physical pain. Like me, they know joy and sorrow and want a life of peace in which they can flourish.

Day after day, as I study nonviolence alongside these two friends, it is hard not to wonder if the Anabaptist vision should include them. As these friendships grow and my commitment to pacifism becomes stronger, the Anabaptist vision begins to stir beyond its original intent. I consider whether the nonviolence that so strongly defines my tradition ought to include Julio, Fargo and others like them.

The Christian tradition is filled with resources that encourage humans to extend dignity and nonviolence to animals (and the entire creation). I discover that from the creation narrative to Isaiah's peaceable kingdom to the teachings of Jesus, we are repeatedly encouraged to treat all creation with the love of Christ.

What I find most powerful, however, is Paul's eschatological vision of salvation in Romans 8:18-23. Paul convinces me that God desires to redeem the entire cosmos, not simply humanity. I learn from him to envision an end to creation's "bondage to decay" and to hope that God will somehow end the suffering and violence that now permeate existence. I come to believe with Paul that God has a better eschatological end in mind for the entire cosmos—an end free of the pain and suffering of violence.

Like me, my cats know joy and sorrow and want a life of peace in which they can flourish.

This is admittedly a big vision. Every day I experience and benefit from the violence built into the natural processes of the cosmos. Yet though violence in nature is inevitable, I am not convinced we must therefore accept any and every instance of it as though nothing can be done or as if God is simply waiting for the "eschaton" (the last things) to redeem creation. As I read and reflect on Anabaptist nonviolence and the Christian eschatological tradition, I see the beauty of a divine vision not meant for the future alone.

The Anabaptist tradition has long resisted the idea that the teachings of Jesus are restricted to some future time when they will be completely possible to live. We see the vision of Christ as one meant to transform our world here and now. Anabaptists have certainly not blindly accepted violence between humans as the way things have to be, despite the fact that violence has played a

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Max Voran | 2009 TM photo contest entrant

large role in human heritage.

While a vision of ecological nonviolence cannot be completely ushered in at the moment, this does not mean we simply wait for a future time to extend the gospel of peace to our animal neighbors. With the peaceful end God has in mind for creation, it is clear that Anabaptist-Mennonite nonviolence has a direct role to play in our relationship with creation. I propose that we broaden the Anabaptist vision of nonviolence to a position of "eco-pacifism." Exactly what this means and how it would work out is complex and requires actual dialogue in Anabaptist communities. To put it simply, I suggest eco-pacifism as an ethic that (1) sees all creation as morally considerable and (2) employs the ideal of nonviolence to (3) treat all creation (insofar as it is possible) in accord with its intrinsic nature, allowing it to meet its own purposes and function according to its own design.

While we cannot eliminate all violence in nature, it does seem to be in our power to extend the nonviolent love of the gospel to many animals.

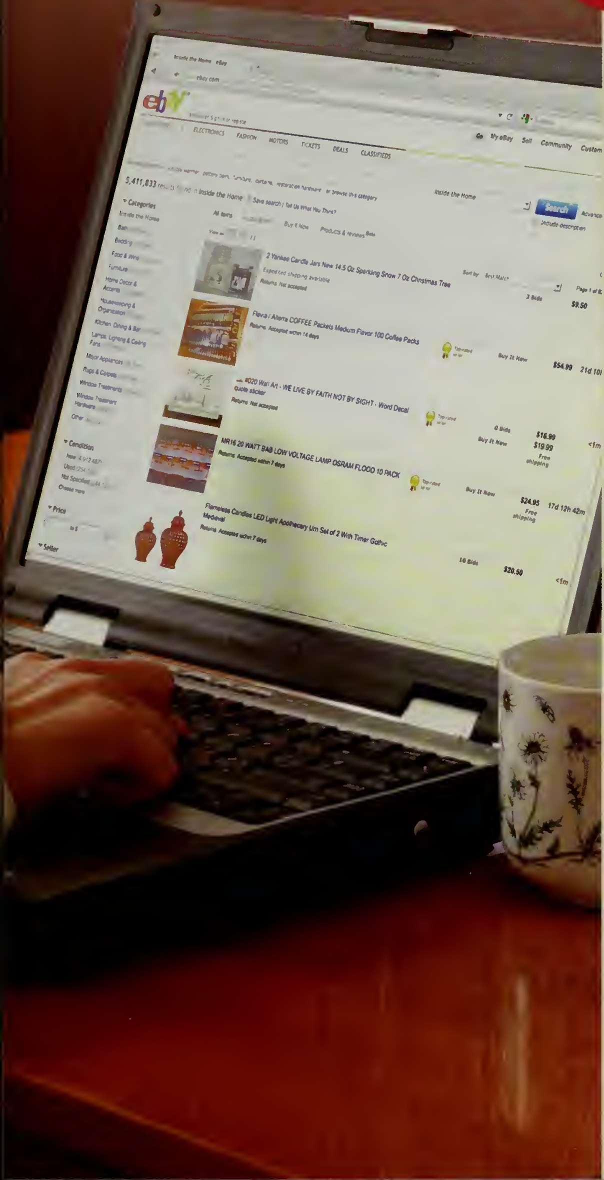
I recall vividly my realization of the necessity of a theology of nonviolence toward our animal neighbors. While reading C. David Coats' *Old MacDonald's Factory Farm*, I was horrified to discover the methods of modern industrialized farming—a far cry from traditional animal husbandry. From a chapter on pigs in factory farms I learned about the treatment of sows used to give birth to as many offspring as possible—all of whom will be slaughtered for human consumption. I read of mothers confined for the better part of their short lives to birthing crates where they can barely move, let alone properly care for their young. The thought of an animal being restricted from movement for three to four years, being forced to give birth as often as they are able and then to be deprived from natural interaction with their young moved me to tears. I found that conditions for other animals are no better; I immediately became a vegetarian and sought other ways to promote nonviolence toward our animal neighbors. How could I continue to accept such radical violence toward creatures loved by a God who seeks to redeem them from violence?

Eco-pacifism does not always mean a refusal to take life. I recognize that we cannot always survive without some forms of violence and the taking of life. But we may ask when it is in line with God's eschatological vision to refrain from killing if it is unnecessary for our survival. Since so much of the future vision described above relates to an end to suffering, Anabaptists should consider refraining from killing or supporting the killing and torture of other-than-human animals that have the capacity to suffer when it is not necessary for our survival. While we cannot eliminate all violence in nature, it does seem to be in our power to extend the nonviolent love of the gospel to many animals. Doing this represents a further inbreaking of the kingdom that we believe ought to impact our world now as well as characterize the age to come.

My experiences have shaped my sensitivity toward this topic. My upbringing in close proximity to animals of all kinds, my strong bonds with two specific companion animals and my love for the Anabaptist tradition of nonviolence shape my outlook on life. Humans are by no means the only species longing for redemption and peace. God offers this redemption and peace to all creation, not just humans. Redemption begins on Earth and involves living according to the divine vision of peace here and now. To this end, Christians ought to begin extending the gospel of peace beyond the border of species. Though we may never in this life arrive at the fullness of the vision, we can see its partial fulfillment as we live more and more peacefully with our animal neighbors.

Matthew Eaton is a doctoral candidate at the University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto, studying theology with a focus on ecological and animal ethics, and attends Toronto United Mennonite Church.

Deliver me from ebay®



I needed to return to the mission field to break the hold materialism had on me.

by Esther M. Bailey

Downsizing after my husband's death allowed me to exercise my knack for interior design. Although our house on Camelback Mountain in Phoenix. had been well-done, everything remained exactly the same for 30 years. It was time for a fresh start.

Especially in the finishing touches, I looked for something unique, such as the wallpaper border of cowboy boots I chose for my Western room. I like lots of conversation pieces. To find items I pictured in my mind, I turned to the Internet.

A ledge extends between my ▶

living room and office, leaving an open space up to the cathedral ceiling. Decorating the ledge in my office became one of my last challenges. For a start, I found a wallpaper border for the wall under the ledge. Not only did the colors blend with my decor, the design confirmed my faith with Scripture texts written on various shaped plaques. All I needed was the right display to sit on top of the ledge.

After browsing the Internet for several hours, I selected buildings and accessories to create a miniature village. I cut out paper replicas to make sure everything would fit together.

With my list in hand, I went to the computer to order. A note on the Website stated that the company would be closed for two weeks because of inclement weather. The weather improved, but the business did not reopen in two weeks—or two months.

Here I was giving in to the urge to check out the latest listing in case I found something I couldn't live without but didn't need at all.

When I find I can't get something, I really want it. Since I knew the manufacturer of the product, I went online to search for other suppliers. I found an item or two here and there, but it would not be easy to collect the 18 items needed.

About the third link I clicked threw me into eBay. In all the Internet shopping I had done, I had stayed clear of eBay. I didn't know how it worked and had no desire to learn. Besides, I had heard about people being scammed on eBay. Without other options, though, I set up an account. The ease of finding what I wanted amazed me. In less than a month, my village was complete and I was finished with eBay.

Or so I thought. It wasn't long before I looked for other hard-to-find items such as novelty teapots and soap dispensers. When I finished my house, I got hooked on looking for brand-name purses and jewelry. The list went on and on.

Fortunately, my eBay activity didn't upset my budget because I purposely set a $250 limit on the account. Still, that was money spent that could go to a better cause. Wasting time was of even greater concern. The several hours a day I spent on home shopping became an escape mechanism. Perhaps even an addiction.

I had always considered myself immune to addictive behavior. Tobacco, drugs, alcohol, gambling or pornography could not get a hold on me. I was too strong. Yet here I was giving in to the urge to check out the latest listing in case I found something I couldn't live without but didn't need at all.

There's nothing wrong with shopping on eBay unless it's done to excess, and I was approaching that point. Realizing I needed to break the power of a habit in the making, I seriously prayed, "Deliver me from eBay."

It's just a matter of discipline, I thought. Resist the temptation. Many times I did, but then I slipped up and disappointed myself—and God. So I continued to pray.

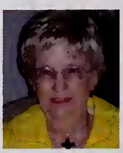
God answered my prayer through a 13-year-old girl named Emily. She had just returned from a mission trip to Jamaica, where she met people who had little of this world's possessions but still had joy in their hearts. "After my experience, I don't want much," Emily said.

Her remark stuck with me. Twenty years earlier I had had a similar experience that had caused me to think like Emily. At least in my mind, I needed to return to the mission field to break the hold materialism had on me.

Gradually, I transferred my vicarious mission experience to concern for a friend who had gone through a rough time. God put it on my heart to help meet her need. "Giving helps counteract materialism," my pastor had said. The blessing I received from her joy was far greater than finding a bargain on eBay.

I hadn't been on eBay for several months when I decided to look for something of interest. My password wouldn't work. I smiled at God's sense of humor. Later, I received an e-mail stating that my information needed to be updated. Having been warned that replying to such a message can lead to identity theft, I deleted the e-mail and cancelled the account.

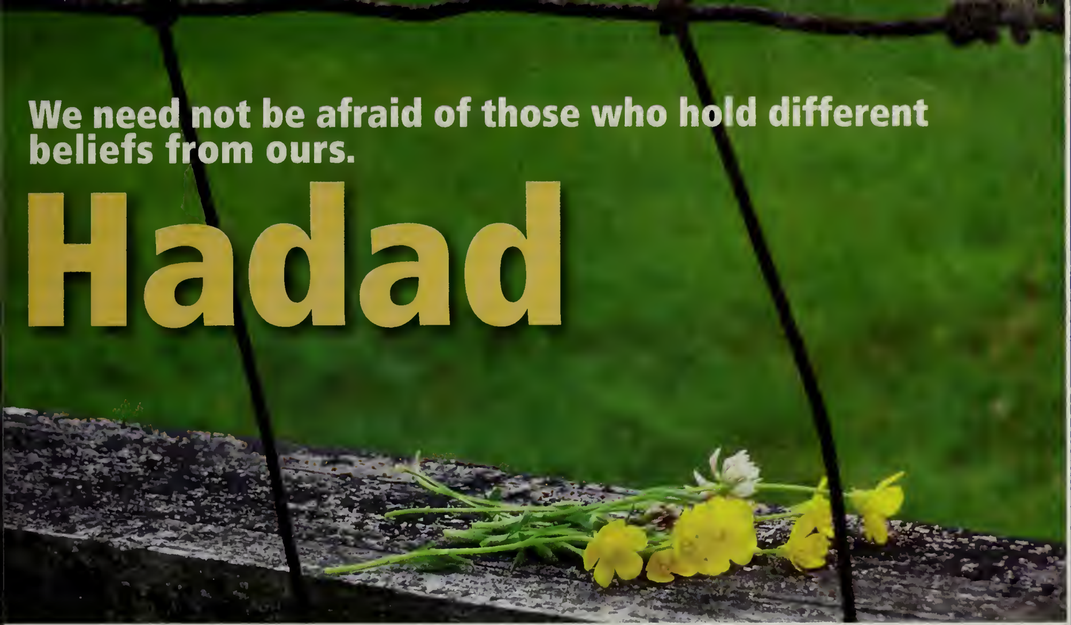
Whether or not I ever again shop on eBay does not matter. Getting the most value from my time and money is what's important. In any event, shopping of any kind will not become an addiction. The God I trust is too strong to let that happen.



Esther M. Bailey lives in Scottsdale, Ariz.

We need not be afraid of those who hold different beliefs from ours.

Hadad



by Tim Schultz

A few years back, I made a new friend named Hadad. We were strangers who met amid the noise and foot traffic of the shopping mall. Within moments, however, we were conversing at a deep level, exchanging glimpses into the mysteries of our Christian and Muslim souls. If you had told me during my youthful evangelical days that I would be talking with a Muslim without trying to convert him, I likely would have questioned the quality and relevance of my spiritual condition. What's the point, if not to convert, right?

Life was much easier during the years when I knew my fellow "believers" and I were right about God. After all, we had the Four Spiritual Laws and other gospel tracts to assure us in our mission to convert the rest of the world. (By the way, I still embrace the simple gospel message as truth, so don't be worried that I'll be left behind.) Yet something has changed in my thinking. My understanding of other faiths and even other Christian doctrines has expanded to a degree that scares me some. I am on a journey that reaches beyond convictions.

Growing up, one fence that was securely in place was our attitude of rightness over the Catholics. I learned that Catholics were not really Christians, and their priests liked to drink wine. There were also the lawn fetes, statue idols and bingo to assure us non-Catholics that we were on the holy road to heaven. It felt good to know we were right. I was in my 20s, having lunch with a Catholic I admired for his social service, when something he said sent a glimpse of light through my closed door of religious reality. Could he really be finding Jesus like I found Jesus, just in a different way, in the Eucharist? As I look back, it might have been me who was converted that day.

> God did not create only one flower, yet many of us keep clutching the same wilting bouquets.

Conviction has its place, but the downside of overcertainty is the elimination of tones and shades of truth that offer a creative understanding of a life that is expansive and wonder-filled. God did not create only one flower, yet many of us keep clutching the same wilting bouquets. Even the Anabaptist conviction of nonresistance should not be off-limits for exploration and discussion. So far, I have not been convinced in ways other than peacemaking, but listening to a global church that does not largely share our views has great value.

Continued on page 54 ▶

On becoming an elder Boomer

Ken Gingerich is art director for Mennonite Church USA and lives in Albuquerque, N.M.

As part of the Boomer generation, I'm rounding a corner of life that many of us have been avoiding. We're hitting the last phase of our careers and heading into whatever follows.

I admit there's much for us to regret. When I hear my sons express concern about the environmental, economic and social crises permeating our culture, I feel more than a little angst about the world we're leaving to future generations. But maybe we can use some of the more redemptive characteristics of our generation to help us all move forward.

Deconstruction: Facing loss like we've embraced life—head-on

For me, recent experiences of loss bring home the reality that the building phase of my life is slowing down. My wife developed breast cancer. Thankfully, it is in remission. But the experience made us intensely aware of the importance of focusing on current relationships.

I also experienced the death of my brother, which felt like having something torn out of my side. I've taken my time with the grief and allowed it to shape and soften my spirit.

In my congregation, a longtime friend and fellow member was asked to "step back" from fellowship because of personal boundary violations. We've grappled with the issues of abuse of power and the structures that allowed it to happen. It's been hard work, but we are emerging from the experience, albeit with a Jacob's limp.

Reflection: Passage to a new role

This past fall I was given a sabbatical leave after 16 years of work for Mennonite Church USA/Mennonite Mission Network. I spent the first month in a little casita in the village of Taos, N.M. I read voraciously, walked dozens of miles, painted, relaxed, prayed, connected with local friends and worked intentionally to appreciate the gift of becoming an "elder."

Taos friend Todd Wynward said it this way: "Think of yourself as being like a mature tree. More deeply rooted, taller in age, arching over and providing cover for those of us who are still in the building phase of our lives."

I needed to hear this and think it is needed across the church. It offers a way to stay engaged but from a new perspective. We can be a nonanxious presence and share wisdom and insight when asked, letting go of agendas of ego, power and control. We can rejoice when new "builders" in our congregations come into their own fullness of vision and leadership.

> We can be a nonanxious presence and share wisdom and insight when asked, letting go of agendas of ego, power and control.

Relocation: Reconnecting with our '60s era activist heritage

During a road trip on my sabbatical, I reread Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, which also speaks to relinquishing dreams and power. While life, like a road trip, is unpredictable, we don't have to wander aimlessly. We can use our newfound status as elders to be more intentional with our time.

There are dozens of emerging Anabaptist communities that could benefit from the connections, support and life experiences of Mennonite Boomers. What if even 10 percent of us offered to relocate for a few (or more) years to be "deeply rooted trees," offering cover for such communities? What could we learn, and how could we be transformed as Mennonite Church USA? (Kudos to those already doing this.)

Transformation: Coming down to where we need to be

Annie Dillard writes, "Occasionally it's a bearing wall that has to come down." Once the underpinnings of our (sometimes false) construction are removed, we're able to see that the incoming world isn't nearly as threatening or different as we've assumed.

Todd, a "convinced" Anabaptist, also said, "If you Mennonites really opened yourselves up [tore down the cultural barriers], there are twice as many people who would want to be part of you than there are in the current church." Responding to this challenge means deconstructing some bearing walls we've built over the past 500 years, relinquishing some cultural convictions about the way we function and relate—those that hinder us from embracing the God-given gifts and contributions of new folks who can help us revision the future. It's like the challenge Jesus put before the powers and domination systems of his era.

I am optimistic about the future of Mennonite Church USA—as long as we continue to trust in the journey on which Jesus is leading us. Following Jesus means we aren't in control, knowing when to let go. It implies we're not going to get comfortable any time soon—regardless of our age. But I'm increasingly hopeful that our journey together is going to be pretty "outta sight." TM

Race and culture are not the same

The decision at Pittsburgh 2011 to include the antiracism program within the intercultural transformation program has the potential to ignore the unique and particularly devastating effects of racism. While this may be a good move organizationally, I question whether it is a good move conceptually and strategically.

It is critical to understand the difference between culture and the negative expression of ethnocentrism on the one hand and race and the discriminatory aspects of racism on the other. I cringed when the group making the presentation at Pittsburgh referred to "white culture." Thinking that groups defined by race share a culture is common but dangerous. Cultural differences within racial groups can be as great or greater than differences between groups. Race, in and of itself, has little meaning or causal impact. It is the meaning given by society to race that makes it important. It is culture that shapes how we think and behave, not race.

I think the group at the assembly meant white privilege, not white culture. Because society has given race important meanings, there are experiences people of a given race share because of their race. Whites, no matter what their social class or culture, share special privileges and power because of their race. People of color, no matter what their social class or culture, share disadvantage because of their race. These shared privileges and disadvantages often lead to different perspectives and understandings of reality. For example, many white people deny that racism exists, while many people of color experience it nearly every day. The causal factor is not race but society's attribution of meaning to race. Peggy McIntosh defines white privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible, weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks."

Culture is a set of values, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, practices, perspectives and meanings shared by a particular group of people. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture is superior to others and the consequent discriminatory treatment of others.

Race refers to skin color and identifiable biological traits. It has no meaning apart from the meaning given by society. Racism is the negative attitudes and discriminatory treatment given a group primarily because of their race. It is related to the power the dominant group has to set definitions and social meanings. People to some extent can choose and change their culture but cannot choose or change their race.

Cultural transformation celebrates differences and emphasizes mutual understanding and appreciation at individual levels. Antiracism focuses on dismantling structural discrimination rooted in discriminatory power based on race.

It is particularly harmful to attribute cultural differences to race. Thomas Jefferson suggested that people with black skin were somehow inferior in intellect and morality to people with white skin. This belief was the rationalization that justified black chattel slavery. An "expert" has testified that blacks have tendencies toward violence.

Because race is immediately visible in ways culture is not, it often "trumps" culture in determining how people interact. A person who is black, highly educated, Pennsylvania Dutch in culture and wealthy will still experience discrimination and special treatment on the street, when applying for a loan at a bank, when choosing a place to live, at airport scanning stations, while driving, in classrooms and most everywhere else. Racism, built on power differences, systemically disadvantages people of color.

These disadvantages go beyond personal relationships and are incorporated into social and economic structure and policy. The policy of "redlining," which banks with the support of the Federal Housing Administration used following World War II to refuse loans to areas populated by blacks, is one of the major reasons why black families have lower levels of wealth than white families today. Separate education for blacks and whites historically, and current inequalities of educational expenditures and quality related to residential areas, perpetuate differences.

It is tempting to think that the answer is to ignore race and become colorblind. Because racism operates at structural and subtle personal levels, Supreme Court justice Harry Blackman was right when he wrote: "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way." TM

John W. Eby is a member of Slate Hill Mennonite Church in Camp Hill, Pa.

It is culture that shapes how we think and behave, not race.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

32 people will lose their jobs

Mennonite Central Committee restructuring shifts roles to Canada.

After four years and more than $1 million in expenses, Mennonite Central Committee has announced that its restructuring process will mean 32 people will lose their jobs at MCC U.S. Ron Byler, MCC U.S. executive director, made the announcement in a Jan. 20 letter to MCC alumni.

The restructuring means that MCC Binational will disappear. Arli Klassen's role as executive director for MCC Binational will also end on March 31.

"Much of the work in Akron [Pa.] is moving," Klassen said on Jan. 20. "Some is moving to international (locations) and some to Canada."

According to Klassen, MCC Binational was the organizational way MCC Canada and MCC U.S. related.

"We have decided to rebalance how Canada and the U.S. work together," Klassen said. "MCC Binational is how we've made MCC work for the past 90 years. There's been frustration ... because MCC Canada did not have a say in international programs. ... The tensions (between MCC Canada and MCC U.S.) will always be there. But the programs will now be directly owned by both partners."

The new structure will not eliminate any functions within the MCC system, Klassen said, but those functions will be performed through new roles. Klassen was uncertain whether the new roles would mean more MCC employees in Canada and in international locations.

"We're still trying to get a handle on staffing," Klassen said.

Who will be employed was the reason one MCC Binational board member voted against the proposal, the only one to do so. James Logan of Earlham, Ind., was unhappy with the impact the changes would have on the ethnic, racial and gender diversity of staff working at all levels of MCC.

The executive levels of the reconfigured MCC will be even more intensively governed by White North American(s).—James Logan

"I am especially concerned that, with painfully sparse exceptions, the executive levels of the reconfigured MCC will be even more intensively governed by White North American peoples," Logan said in an email on Jan. 23. "White power and privilege, institutionally, routinely expresses itself in the deafening silence of intellectual amnesia, willful ignorance and entitled smugness in the names of openness, toleration, hospitality and (I dare say) in the name of Christ."

Klassen did not respond directly to the charge but listed the changes that will take place.

"The proportion of staff who are people of color will change from 14 percent in April 2011 in the U.S head office to 11 percent in April 2012," Klassen said in an email on Jan. 23. "However, the proportion of people of color who are working with MCC throughout the U.S. (including the head office and the regional offices) will grow from 24 percent in April 2011 to 26 percent in April 2012."

While the restructuring process, called "New Wine/New Wineskins," will mean significant internal changes, it will have little effect on how supporters relate to MCC and its programs, Klassen said.

"Does this change how (the person in the pew) relates to MCC? It does not," Klassen said.

In his letter to MCC alumni, Byler listed additional ways the restructuring will change MCC.

"Stronger accountability to the Anabaptist denominations" is one such change Byler described.

Klassen explained that currently some of the people on the 12 MCC boards of directors are not appointed by their denominations, and the denominations of which they are a part say those board members do not officially represent their denominations.

"The way people are appointed is different from board to board," Klassen said. "Now it is stipulated that at least two-thirds of each board must be appointed by the denomination."

The Wineskins process has also tightened up the branding that each of the remaining boards will do in the future. Byler said that "a small symbol of our commitment to work together" is a new logo color and shared tagline: Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ.

While there had been some debate within MCC circles about whether or not to print "In the name of Christ" on cans of meat, Klassen said she has received more letters on the matter than on anything else.

"In some Muslim countries it is seen as a Crusades (statement)," Klassen said. "We have decided not to drop it and have strengthened the phrase by moving it into our mission statement.

The cost of the Wineskins restructuring will ultimately total $1.5 million, including the costs of implementing the new structure and severance pay, Klassen said. She also noted that the money for the Wineskins process came from operating balances and not from MCC's operating budget. The strengthening of the Canadian dollar against the U.S. dollar contributed to those balances being higher, Klassen said.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Europeans lose MWC presence

Another challenge: more people leaving the church than coming in

At their annual gathering, held in Madrid in November 2011, leaders of European Mennonite conferences decided to hire a coordinator to serve as their liaison to Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and to fulfill some coordination tasks for the European conferences. They also reflected on the challenges they face in the European context.

The decision to hire a coordinator grew out of the hope that MWC will still have a visible presence in Europe after the office in Strasbourg, France, closes in June. European leaders formed a working group consisting of Henk Stenvers (Netherlands), Doris Hege (Germany) and Markus Rediger (Switzerland) to give direction to the work of the coordinator. They are asking congregations to give their blessing.

In his last sermon as general secretary of MWC, Larry Miller spoke on the theme of "the struggle to make the church a place of blessing." Many churches and conferences in Europe face big challenges, with more people leaving the church than coming in. Meeting participants were reminded that no challenge is so big that God can't make out of it a blessing.

The struggle to make the church a place of blessing is almost 500 years old for the Mennonites in Europe and never as relevant as it is today. A concluding statement in Miller's sermon was an encouragement and a challenge: "Like Jacob's life, our life together preparing the church as a place of blessing for one another and for the world is a long and winding road. But we are walking it together, hopefully in the way of Jesus Christ and hopefully to the glory of God."

While the Mennonites in the Netherlands celebrated many milestones in 2011, their thoughts are also turned toward the future as half their members are over 60 years old. Conference leader Otto Bleker is encouraging the Dutch churches to go into their communities after the jubilees of 2011 and not remain the silent ones of the land.

While church numbers are diminishing in general, certain churches are growing—mostly in France. There is now a Mennonite church in Lurs, in the southern region of Provence. Other French churches are looking for bigger meeting places because their numbers are growing.

However, many places in Europe do not have enough trained pastors and leaders, and the Mennonite seminaries are lacking in students and finances. Many churches hire pastors from other denominations. The Spanish churches have started to offer theological courses through the Mennonite theological seminary in Bienenberg, and those interested are mainly coming from evangelical churches.

From Portugal it was reported that the five Mennonite churches are feeling the effects of economic pressures that prevail in the country. Increasingly, people are looking to the churches for help. Help for families under financial pressure are also offered by churches in Germany and Switzerland, where meals for schools are offered inside churches and homeless children are taken in by families. In Germany the themes of peace work and church planting are also being worked on.

The Swiss Mennonites extended an invitation to Sumiswald, Switzerland, for the European Mennonite Regional Conference May 17-20. Sumiswald lies in Emmental, in the basin of Langnau, home of the oldest Swiss Mennonite church. On those dates, the various committees of MWC will meet in Sumiswald, including the Executive Committee, the General Council, the four commissions, the YABs (Young Anabaptists), continental caucus members, educators and other networks. Miller emphasized that these meetings will be extensive, as was the world assembly in Asunción, Paraguay, in 2009.—*From a report by Markus Rediger, MWC executive committee member, chair of the Mennonite European Regional Conference MERK, Bern, Switzerland*

ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH US!

2012 TOURS

EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 18-31)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR STEVE LANDIS (April 25-May 4)
HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 25-June 7)
GLORY of RUSSIA: MOSCOW and ST. PETERSBURG (July 3-13)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
LANDS of the BIBLE: JORDAN and ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR TYLER HARTFORD (July 19-28)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 23-September 3)
TOUR to LITHUANIA (in partnership with LCC International University) (September 12-19)
MENNONITE STORY in POLAND and UKRAINE (September 18-29)
SCENIC AUTUMN CRUISE: CANADA and NEW ENGLAND (October 6-16)
MEDA TOUR to ETHIOPIA and TANZANIA (October12-24)
SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (October 13-22)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
~~VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)~~
MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
MEDA in MOROCCO (April 2-12)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25)
MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15)
GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 6-19)
ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
THE BRITISH ISLES (England, Scotland and Wales) with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
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'Following the cloud' one step at a time

Couple starts congregation 15 months after becoming Mennonite.

Photo provided

TOWN EAST GROUP NA

Grace Mennonite Fellowship attends Audrey Rutella's sobriety birthday celebration (front row, from left): Ashlee Shadix, Michael Sosebee, Audrey Rutella, Wendy Clement (friend): (back row, from left): Cody Cagle, Amber Bogenschutz, Steve Mascho, Karen Mascho, Howard Oliver, Chiquita Armstrong, Mike Mascho.

When Karen and Steve Mascho of Gladewater, Texas, first encountered Mennonites in April 2010, they never imagined that 15 months later, they'd be planting a Mennonite church in their own community of about 6,500 people.

The Maschos were in northern Indiana, having their recreational vehicle repaired, when they toured the Menno-Hof Amish-Mennonite Information Center in Shipshewana, Ind.

"I thought, These people believe what I have felt in my heart for years," Karen Mascho says. The Maschos had been longing for a congregation that would stay connected throughout the week.

After returning home, Karen—who works as a special-needs teacher—read the book about Mennonite history she had bought at Menno-Hof and began researching Mennonites online. After discovering the restorative justice programs at Fresno (Calif.) Pacific University, she and Steve became involved with a Houston-based prison ministry. Steve, who is on disability due to a heart condition, also has been active with a motorcycle ministry for more than 10 years.

Karen credits the website of Paul Williams, associate pastor of Mechanic Grove Mennonite Church in Quarryville, Pa., with having deepened her understanding of Mennonites' faith and beliefs. An April 2011 visit to Plow Creek, a Mennonite intentional community in Tiskilwa, Ill., clinched her decision to become Mennonite. In May, she called Mauricio Chenlo, denominational minister for church planting for Mennonite Church USA/Mennonite Mission Network.

"I told him we were looking for a church that would share our vision of reaching out to people on the fringes of society, and asked if he could send some missionaries," Karen says. "He said, 'If you want a church there, think of yourselves as church planters.' "

Two weeks later, the Maschos were attending a church planting seminar in Oklahoma City sponsored by Western District Conference. Karen recalls an exercise with her table group. "I felt compassion for the hurting, the lost, the dying, the oppressed and the poor in a way I never had before," she says. "God was shaping my heart for service."

In June, they attended a prayer meeting where they learned that a number of residents of the local public housing development had expressed interest in a Bible study. Karen contacted the people on the list, and six of them came to the first weekly fellowship meal and Bible study July 7 in the housing authority's meeting room. They began studying the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' teachings. In August, they added meetings on Sunday afternoons and chose a name for their congregation: "Grace Mennonite Fellowship."

Currently Grace Mennonite has 18 participants. Most were unchurched or had not been to church since childhood. They are actively involved in each other's lives, from attending sobriety anniversaries to writing to family members in prison to having game nights. At Thanksgiving, they expanded the local churches' annual Thanksgiving meal by adding a delivery option, reaching 250 more people.

"We welcome all people who want a relationship with Jesus and a community and are willing to be accountable and be encouraged," Karen says.

She marvels at the way things have fallen into place, one step at a time. "We're following the [pillar of] cloud," she says. "God's opening these doors for us, and we're just walking through them."

A Spirit-led connection for the Maschos has been their close relationship with Metro Mennonite Church of Oklahoma City, also a recent church plant. The Maschos met five members of Metro Mennonite at the church planting seminar and became members of the congregation that weekend. "They basically adopted us," Karen says.

The Maschos plan to pursue Pastoral Studies Distance Education through Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary; both Western District Conference and Mennonite Women USA have contributed toward their tuition expenses.
—Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA

A kidney for Christmas

Miller donates organ to someone he has never met.

Serena Townsend

Laurie Miller at his home three weeks after the surgery.

This Christmas season, Laurie Miller decided to give the gift of life—to a total stranger. He underwent surgery on Dec. 8, 2011, in order to donate his kidney to someone he's never met.

"I've been blessed all my life with really good health," said Miller on Dec. 29, 2011. "I just felt like some people just don't have that." Miller is director of student programs at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Miller has wanted to do this since 1999, when Ken Schuler, also from Rockingham County, Va., donated a lobe of his liver to a stranger in Virginia Beach. At the time, Schuler's daughter attended Broadway High School, where Miller was working as a guidance counselor.

In December 2010, Miller started undergoing the required tests for a kidney donation at the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville, Va. The process took about six months, beginning with the least invasive tests and building up to MRIs and other such analyses. UVA assigned Miller his own advocate to ensure rights and objectivity, and the recipient's insurance covered all medical costs; Miller only had to pay for transportation.

Because he had been told to expect to be off work for about four weeks after the surgery, Miller decided not to squeeze it in at the end of the summer. Rather, he waited for December, when he knew he would have enough time to recover. But barely more than two weeks later, he could "hardly tell I had the surgery" except for a bit of soreness and scarring. Miller had a good recovery, which he attributes to his good physical condition prior to surgery. He was up and walking after two days and going for hour-long walks every day just two-and-a-half weeks later.

Miller does not know who received his kidney, as UVA keeps donors and recipients anonymous for one year after the procedure. This not only protects the donor in case the recipient's body rejects the new kidney, but also reduces emotional stress on the recipient, who already has plenty to deal with. After one year, recipients are given the option to contact their donors. For the time being, "you sort of just hope that it worked," said Miller, and "hope that they can enjoy their life a little more as a result."

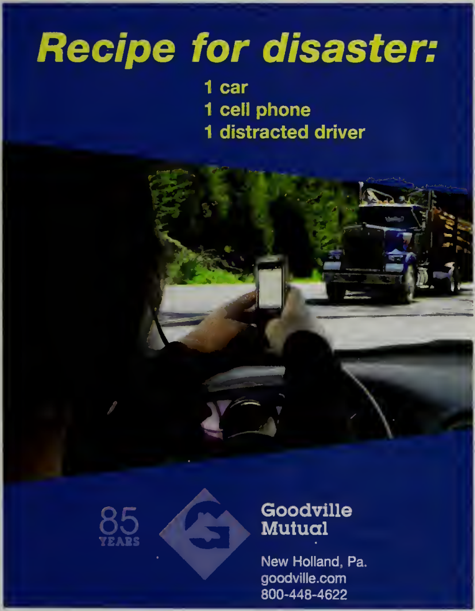
According to Miller, UVA has about 500 people on their waiting list for kidney transplants, but they only receive about 40 living donations each year. Only two of those exchanges have remained anonymous in the last two years.

Knowing this exceeding demand, Miller encourages others to donate organs as he has.

"If people are so inclined, there is a big need for it," he said. "People seem to think it's a really big deal, but it's not a difficult process."

Miller spent only two days in the hospital and less than three weeks recovering. But as with any significant surgery, he points out, there is some risk.

"It's a very tangible donation, even if you don't know the recipient," Miller said, that will "maybe even save their life."—*Serena Townsend, an intern for* The Mennonite



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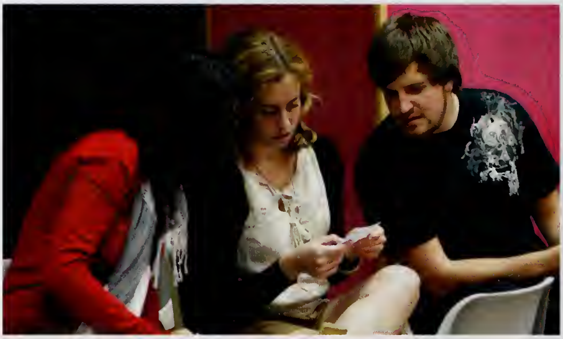
Young adults in Spain take God's message of love to the streets.


Amy Schmid

From left: Raquel Costas, Vanesa Moreno, and Andres Vallejo look over the prayer requests they collected while ministering in the streets of Burgos, Spain.

For 10 years, the younger generation of Burgos Mennonite Church in Spain watched their parents preach, sing and pray on Sunday afternoons at a busy promenade in the middle of the city.

As young adults in 2011, the young people of the church (now merged with another congregation and called United Anabaptist Communities) wanted to take the message of Christ's love to the streets in Burgos. But they didn't feel that preaching on a street corner was what they were called to do. They needed their own way to minister to people.

"I think it's easier in another city, where you don't know anyone," says Vanesa Moreno, one of the young adults, "but we wanted to do it here, in our own city."

A Youth With a Mission group who came to visit Burgos gave them an idea for a different, relational approach, and the young people decided to try it. They set up a table with a box for prayer requests and offered "free hugs" to whoever wanted one.

Each Friday, right before their Bible study, the young adults carried out their new street evangelism plan. They got many questions about why they were there, and they used the opportunity to talk about their faith. By the third week, people began to remember them and submit prayer requests.

"People are getting to know them, and a couple of women are attending church as a result, one of whom is also a first-year English student of mine," says Connie Byler, who is a long-term Mennonite Mission Network worker in Burgos. "The youth are very excited and have the sense that the Holy Spirit is doing new and wonderful things in their lives."

"In the three months that we have been doing this, about three people have started to come to our church," says Moreno, "and three guys don't come to church, but they hang out with us on Saturdays because they just want to be with us."

After spending a few hours taking prayer requests and giving hugs, the youth take their box back to Bible study. They read each slip aloud and pray for the requests individually.

Pastor Agustin Melguizo says that the young people at United Anabaptist Communities are an example of God's work in the church.

"The youth and young adults are not content to simply have their own experiences with God," he says. "They want to share those experiences with their peers."

After a few months of meeting people of all ages, the young adults decided to add a new element to their street evangelism. They wanted to reach their friends and people their own age. So they took a chair out at midnight on a Friday, when the streets of Burgos are packed with young people, and took turns standing on the chair and sharing their testimonies.

The next Sunday at church they continued to share testimonies, this time with their congregation.

"They were so full of joy on Sunday during sharing time," Byler says. "I can't believe that about 10 of the teenagers each took three-minute turns to speak up in front of friends and classmates in those crowds."

Others are noticing, too. Moreno was interviewed on a local radio station and asked to explain why she and the other youth have chosen to do street evangelism.

"[The radio host asked] why we are doing this, and I said that we are not trying to 'convert' anyone to any religion but sharing the love of God with others," Moreno says. "We think, more than ever, that the people need a lot of love and someone who listens to them."

Moreno says that people who hear about the young adults' activity seem to like what they're doing—even the local police said it's a better option than what other young people might do on weekends.

She sees it as planting seeds."I pray that we can see the fruits of all of this," Moreno says, "but even if we don't, ... this is what God is calling us to do—not only as an activity one day per week but also living every day talking about the amazing God that we have and his love for people."—*Melanie Hess of Mennonite Mission Network*

Spanish church receives grant

Mennonite Men supports first new Protestant church building in Burgos.

Photo provided

Heli, director of the Africa project, worship leader, choir (a bass) and full-time volunteer, working on the church entrance. He is an electrician by trade.

Since 1999, the service component of Mennonite Men—JoinHands—has offered an annual tithe grant to Mennonite denominational mission boards in the United States and Canada.

In November 2011, a JoinHands grant of $5,000 was given to Mennonite Mission Network to assist with the building project of Comunidades Anabautistas Unidas (United Anabaptist Communities), a Mennonite church in Burgos in northern Spain.

Comunidades Anabautistas Unidas is the congregation of Connie and Dennis Byler, who have worked in Burgos since 1981 with Mennonite Mission Network. Dennis teaches at a Protestant seminary, edits *El Mensajero*, the monthly paper of the Anabaptist network of churches in Spain, and writes and translates books into Spanish for Spanish-speaking Anabaptist churches in Spain and elsewhere. Connie is an elder on the congregation's leadership team and provides spiritual companionship to many people, including some who are living with AIDS. Both Bylers have pastoral roles with existing and emerging Anabaptist and Mennonite congregations across Spain.

"This is the very first new Protestant building in our city of 200,000 people," Connie says. "I don't know of even more than two or three that have been built to be churches in all our travels in Spain. Evangelical churches, as we are called, normally occupy a storefront below apartment buildings and can have problems because of the noise."

Connie says the new building is coming about due to the merger of the two main Protestant congregations in Burgos, the Mennonite congregation and the San Francisco church, an unaffiliated Baptist congregation. The groups had met during the summers and then decided to merge two years ago. She says that because the new congregation did not have enough money to pay someone to finish the building, people from the church have been working every Saturday and holiday for a year on the inside of the building.

"They are really tired by now, because it's been almost a year of hard work, but we see the results, the love, the fellowship. We are so proud of them," she says.

Connie says the new building will provide much-needed space for the growing congregation as well as access to parking spaces. She says the congregation is excited to have a more visible location in a newer part of the city; they have been meeting in a cul-de-sac.

"Most of our mission activities will be based here," Connie says. "Our youth are really fired up for mission in the city; we have two Africa ministries, the headquarters of the Association of the Evangelical Churches of our region, the Association of Mennonite and Anabaptist groups in Spain, and other ministries such as a prison ministry and ministry with deaf people.

"Above all, we sense that God is opening the heavens over our city at this time and getting us ready to minister and receive people who will be seeking God and a healthy and true Christian lifestyle. These are times of blessing and faithfulness and provision."

Last fall, Connie said the congregation hoped to move into the building before Christmas, though much work was still needed. An inauguration for the building was planned for Jan. 14-15. Since 1985, JoinHands has granted $1.6 million to more than 60 congregations in North America and across the globe.—*A joint release from Don Yoder of Mennonite Men and Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA*

Hardwood doors, trim a $200,000 contribution

Six kinds of hardwood come from a 13-acre forest preserve in Indiana.

Everett J. Thomas

Stanley Green (left), executive director of Mennonite Mission Network, shows a hardwood door and trim to Tina Stoltzfus Schlabach in the new Mennonite Church USA offices in Elkhart, Ind., on Dec. 21, 2011. Schlabach was a pastor at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., where Green is a member.

The new Mennonite Church USA office building in Elkhart, Ind., features beautiful hardwood trim and interior doors. They were a gift from a group of supporters who contributed expertise each step of the way. The design process began in 2004. The lumber was harvested in 2008 and milled beginning in June 2011.

The six kinds of hardwood, which includes black walnut, cherry and maple, came from a 13-acre forest preserve that is part of Southfield Village, an intergenerational community near South Bend, Ind. Three families from the Kern Road Mennonite Church made the contribution: LeRoy and Phyllis Troyer, Eldon (Laverne) and Luella Gerig and Loren and Julie Roth.

The timber harvest was managed by Steve Hite, of Goshen, Ind., who donated his time and materials. The trees were felled, sawn into lengths and delivered to Don Steider, former maintenance director for the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart. Steider rough-sawed and dried the lumber and then shipped some of the wood to Summit Wood Industries in Orville, Ohio, which milled the lumber used for the trim. The company is owned by Gary and Victoria Miller of Orrville, Ohio, members of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

Other lumber was shipped to Keim Lumber Company in Charm, Ohio, which then built more than 70 solid wood doors, sidelights and transoms. The company is owned by Bill and Eva Keim of Sugarcreek, Ohio. Bill Keim estimated that it took two employees three weeks to build the doors and other pieces. The company also contributed the door hardware and glass.

"We attend Walnut Creek Mennonite Church," Keim said on Dec. 13. "We support various mission projects, and this is our expertise."

A spokesman for D.J. Construction, contractor for the new building, estimated the value of the trim, doors and hardware at approximately $200,000.

Peter Graber, the Mennonite Mission Network administrator who managed the fund-raising campaign for the new office building, noted that other companies and donors also provided material gifts for the building.

Those gifts included trees, seed and cabinets (see "Fathers Build Furniture for New Elkhart Building," December 2011).

Leroy Troyer is the architect of record for the new office building. His architectural firm, The Troyer Group, provided the unique design for the doors and trim.

"We trust that the Mennonite churches and members can be inspired to give and support the ongoing mission and ministries of Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA," Troyer said to Graber, "as you move into your own home."

In addition to Mennonite Mission Network, the new office building will house staff for Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board, Mennonite Education Agency, MennoMedia and *The Mennonite*.

In November 2011, Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman volunteered his time to install some of the hardwood trim.

"Since I am a woodworker," Stutzman said on Dec. 15, 2011, "I have a particular appreciation for the generosity of all the donors who have made it possible to put top quality hardwood trim in our new facility … The combination of hardwoods in each trim unit reflects the vision for the facility itself, a desire for a unity of the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts."

Most staff members who will work out of the new building moved into their offices at the end of December 2011. —*Everett J. Thomas*

Libraries get a second wind

Church libraries reach out to Amish neighbors, students and bus drivers.

In the era of tablets, online books and Wikipedia, where does this leave church libraries? Dusty? Forgotten? Neglected?

Several Mennonite churches have overcome any challenges facing traditional libraries by finding inventive ways to offer relevant library services to their church members and beyond.

Clinton Frame Mennonite Church in rural Goshen, Ind., uses their library as an outreach to members of the community, many of whom are Amish.

In 1999, the congregation moved into a new church building. At the time, the library committee felt that members underutilized the library and its resources.

"We had many books that were never being checked out," says Shirley Kauffman, librarian, on Jan. 11. Nancy Mast was the librarian at the time of the move and retired in October 2010.

The committee suggested that the library serve as an outreach ministry by sharing the resources with those who live near the church. Now about 30 Amish families use the library.

"They talked to one of our Amish neighbors and ask if they would be interested in checking out books," Kauffman says. "The feedback was positive and, as Nancy said, the rest is history."

Kauffman said the library committee selects books with "positive Christmas messages," along with books by popular authors. Many of the Amish boys like the Hardy Boys books. The Amish girls like books by Wanda Brunstetter and Dave and Neta Jackson, as well as Focus on the Family books. Adults check out books by Karen Kingsbury, Terri Blackstock, Beverly Lewis and Kim Vogel Sawyer.

We had many books that were never being checked out.—Shirley Kauffman

"It has been a great opportunity to learn to know who our neighbors are and to establish friendships," Kauffman says.

The church library of Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.) also reaches out to individuals beyond church members in their urban setting.

"Our Christian fiction section is frequented as much by the bus drivers for the Head Start classroom hosted at [the church] as it is by members," says Matthew Hickman, associate pastor of youth and family life.

Hickman says they stock a native plant gardening reference shelf with hard-to-find or out-of-print books. The church plans to host three of the monthly meetings of the local native plant society this year in our building and will highlight the library.

Sue Schrag

Hazel Yoder reads in the library to students from the Head Start class hosted in the Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.) building.

"I mention it frequently to gardening clubs, gardeners I meet and to university students," says Hickman.

The library also offers a large collection of Anabaptist-Mennonite writings.

"These are utilized on occasion by students from the local Christian seminary who are intrigued by or formally learning about Anabaptists," Hickman says. "You won't find Pilgram Marpeck or John Howard Yoder in most libraries, but you will here."

On the other end of the spectrum, First Mennonite in Lincoln, Neb., now offers their library's card catalog online.

Katherine Haake of First Mennonite helped to implement an online book cataloging service called "LibraryThing." Members can browse this virtual library from any computer with an Internet connection.

"Our small group even accessed it last year to help decide what to study—from the comfort of a member's living room," says Haake.

When Haake started her term as church librarian, she began searching for a low-cost electronic library inventory program. She asked around and found that Anita and David Breckbill, First Mennonite members, use LibraryThing for their own personal book collection.

"It has come in handy for purchasing and donation decisions," Haake says. "No money is wasted through inadvertent duplication." For example, one member used LibraryThing when going through his personal library. He saw which books the library already had in its collection and which ones it might need. LibraryThing is free for the first 200 books and $25 for more storage.—*Anna Groff*

After fire, a new home for Service Adventure unit

Four participants and two leaders move into new house in Albuquerque.

Andrew Clouse

The Albuquerque Service Adventure unit enjoys dinner in their new home. From left and around the table: Erin Regier, Brian Yoder Schlabach, Michelle Peachey, Melanie Pilz, Anna Yoder Schlabach, Hannah Martin.

The new year brings renewed hope, a fresh perspective, and a lease on a four-bedroom house for the Albuquerque, N.M., Service Adventure unit, whose members were displaced just before Christmas after a fire damaged the unit house.

No one was home at the time of the blaze, but most of the furniture and housewares were damaged beyond repair by smoke, and the unit's kitten, Sadie, died from smoke inhalation. After multiple loads of laundry with industrial strength detergent, though, most of the participants' clothes and belongings are almost as good as new.

The group turned the situation into a learning opportunity. In their final worship night before Christmas break, the unit members all made a list of what they lost and what they had to gain as a result of the fire. They said the exercise helped them realize that in adversity there is also opportunity. At the time, they didn't have a home. Melanie Pilz, one of the participants, reminded the group that when Mary gave birth to Jesus, the family also had no place to lay their heads.

Service Adventure, a Mennonite Mission Network program, gives young adults ages 17-20 the opportunity to live and serve in community with other young adults and a unit leader or couple. Albuquerque participants are Melanie Pilz, 19, from Rangsdorf, Germany; Erin Regier, 18, from Newton, Kan.; Hannah Martin, 18, from Greencastle, Pa.; and Michelle Peachey, 19, from Lancaster, Pa. Anna and Brian Yoder Schlabach, both 27, of Denver, are the unit leaders.

The Service Adventure unit's new home has renewed their energy to resume work at their placements, as well as their commitment to each other.

"I feel like we're closer as a unit because of this experience, because we all went through it together," says Martin.

Unit members say they are humbled by the outpouring of care by the Albuquerque community and the broader Mennonite church. Albuquerque Mennonite Church members spent a day hauling damaged furniture to the dump and cleaning everything out of the old house. Rio Vista Church of the Nazarene members donated a couch, a twin-bed mattress and numerous odds and ends, and new neighbors rushed to welcome the group and provide them with whatever they needed. Churches and Service Adventure units from all over the country donated money and gift cards to help participants get back on their feet.

"The support from the Albuquerque community and the broader Mennonite church has been humbling and overwhelming," says Carolyn Snyder, the Albuquerque Service Adventure support committee chair. "We appreciate so much the gifts of money, food, household items and, most of all, prayers of support and words of encouragement."

Unit members say they are grateful that families in the church opened their homes for unit members until they found a new house. The participants stayed with three different families over the two-week period between the fire and moving into their new house on New Year's Eve.

> After the fire there was so much uncertainty and despair, almost, but now there's so much hope.—Erin Regier

The new house is conveniently located near bike lanes and bus routes—the primary modes of transportation for the four participants. It is also within walking distance of the church. One of the Service Adventure support committee members saw a "for rent" sign in the house's front lawn during a trip to the grocery store.

While the unit leaders describe the fire and its aftermath as "extremely stressful," unit members are ready to begin the new year with a refreshed dedication to service.

"After the fire there was so much uncertainty and despair, almost," Regier says, "but now there's so much hope."
—Andrew Clouse of Mennonite Mission Network

One building, two congregations

Christmas dinner and auction bridge cultures.

Elizabeth Raid

Members of Calvary Mennonite and Camino de Santidad gather for a Christmas dinner and auction.

The annual Christmas dinner and benefit auction on Dec. 4, 2011, was the first joint gathering of the two groups who meet regularly but separately at the meeting house of Calvary Mennonite Church, Liberal, Kan.

Although everyone is always welcome at this gathering, this year Calvary Mennonite extended a special invitation to Camino de Santidad, the Hispanic church that has been meeting since spring in the Calvary building for Sunday afternoon worship and other weekly activities.

During the weeks of preparation, Calvary pastor Lou Gomez fielded questions from both groups. What do they like to eat? How will I carry on a conversation with someone who speaks another language? What to bring, wear, do—all these and many more wonderings filled the conversations. The 64 reservations that came in seemed overwhelming to the few at Calvary who had to make the preparations for the dinner and auction.

That evening, Calvary provided the meal staples, complemented by salads and desserts from attendees. Items donated for auction were also encouraged. In anticipation, people perused the items to be auctioned—handcrafted gifts, kitchen utensils, meals at local restaurants and tickets for events, and plenty of home-baked goodies—and chose what to bid on.

Pastor Gomez and Pastor Moises of Camino blessed the food and fellowship in prayer, first in English, then in Spanish. People laid aside misunderstandings and misgivings when they filled their plates with ham, beans, potatoes, leaving plenty of room for salads and desserts and sat down together. Conversations around the tables, some filled with Camino members, others with Calvary folks, Low German friends and relatives of other races and backgrounds, flowed in several languages.

Items were held up for all to see, and the opening bid given. There seemed to be no shyness or hesitancy as hands shot up from many directions. Plenty of laughter and light conversation mixed with the bidding added to the goodwill that seemed to build during the evening. Proceeds from the auction went to Mennonite Central Committee.—*Calvary Mennonite Church*

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MWC meetings mean 'end of the beginning'

New structure established for fellowship, collaboration among African churches

Photo provided

MWC Africa Caucus Executive Committee participants (from left): Danisa Ndlovu, Toss Mukwa, Tigist Gelagle, Francisca Mawangu, Thuma Hamukang'andu, Rebecca Osiro, Emelia Amexo, Timothy Lind and Beatrice Kalaki

Two separate meetings of Mennonite World Conference Africa representatives occurred on successive weekends at the end of October and early November 2011 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Together they marked the "end of the beginning" of a five-year-long process to put into place a new structure for fellowship and collaboration among MWC member churches in Africa.

The first gathering was a workshop of Central African MWC General Council delegates, while the second was the annual meeting of the Africa Caucus Executive Committee.

The new caucus process began in March 2006 at the MWC General Council meetings in Pasadena, Calif., where delegates of African Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches agreed that the MWC Africa Caucus would serve as the continental conference for Anabaptist churches in Africa. MWC staff developed an implementation plan, and the caucus approved it in July 2009 at the Paraguay assembly. Key elements of the plan were regional training workshops for African General Council delegates and the creation of a caucus executive committee.

Regional workshops were subsequently held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for Eastern African churches (August 2010), in Accra, Ghana, for West African churches (February 2011) and in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (March 2011), for Southern African churches. The Kinshasa gathering in October 2011 for Central African churches completed the regional trainings.

A combined total of 65 people participated in the workshops, including 35 of the 37 Africa Caucus members. During the workshops, caucus members learned about MWC history and mission and the expectations of General Council delegates. Workshop participants also debated the newly developed statutes for the Africa caucus item by item, with each region making proposals for modifications.

Another key activity of the workshops was sharing the gifts and challenges of each church and each region. Many expressed the need for more exchanges among the Anabaptist-related churches of a given region.

"Even though we're not far from Kinshasa, we feel very isolated from other Mennonites," said Garcia Pedro Domingos, president of the Igreja da Comunidade Menonita em Angola (Community Mennonite Church of Angola). "It is only when we go to MWC assemblies that we meet our Mennonite brothers and sisters next door."

This sense of isolation and desire for more regional fellowship was expressed in every region. Theophilus Tetteh Akoso of the Ghana Mennonite Church gave voice to many when he stressed that "as a caucus we must find ways to strengthen our connections and sharing at every level."

Africa Caucus Executive Committee members were glad to be able to meet in DRC, home to one of the largest bodies of Mennonites in the world. The primary agenda of the committee was to review the feedback coming from the four regional training workshops and to prepare an agenda for the Africa Caucus meeting in May in Switzerland. After studying the proposed changes to the caucus structure coming from each regional group, the committee edited a revised constitution to be presented to the full caucus in May.

On Nov. 6, 2011, a special inter-Mennonite service was planned at the Mopulu congregation of the Communauté Mennonite au Congo (Congo Mennonite Community—CMCo). Mennonite congregations from throughout the city, and from all three Congo Mennonite conferences, as well as official conference representatives were invited to a joint worship and welcome service. MWC president Danisa Ndlovu gave a sermon based on Ephesians 4:17 and following, in which he implored Anabaptists to embrace unity and turn away from all manner of falsehood and corruption. Rev. Joly Birakara, vice president of CMCo, invited MWC to return in 2012 to participate in the events planned to celebrate 100 years of relationships between North American Mennonites and Congolese. "We want you to be with us not only when we are experiencing difficulties, but also on occasions of joy and celebration," Birakara said.—*Tim Lind of Mennonite World Conference Congo*

> Even though we're not far from Kinshasa, we feel very isolated from other Mennonites.
> — Garcia Pedro Domingos

Everence, MCC create e-statement partnership

$1 donated to reforestation projects for each member that enrolls

When Everence members sign up electronically to receive product statements, the world will feel the impact—thanks to a new partnership between Everence and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

For each Everence member who participates in the company's e-statement program, Everence will donate $1 to MCC's reforestation projects worldwide. In turn, each dollar donated will purchase five tree seedlings.

"At Everence, we are committed to being faithful stewards of our environmental resources," says Larry Miller, Everence president and CEO. "As an agency of Mennonite Church USA, it makes sense to partner with other church-related organizations, like MCC, to make an impact on our local and global communities."

"Everence and Mennonite Central Committee share many values and constituents," says Phil Rush, director of MCC's resource generation network. "This partnership gives Everence members a chance to further integrate their faith and finances by making a choice to reduce consumption of natural resources. In turn, the donations received by MCC through this program will help restore God's natural creation in various places around the world."

The Everence e-statement program is available to individuals who own Everence annuities or Praxis Mutual Funds, as well as services through Everence Trust Company, Everence Federal Credit Union and Mennonite Foundation.

Everence members can sign up for e-statements through the "My Everence" section at Everence.com. In addition to being good for the environment, e-statements offer several benefits. For example, members will:

- receive e-statements several days sooner than paper statements,
- be notified by e-mail when a new statement is ready,
- have access to account history dating back to 2007.

"At MCC, we believe that caring for creation fits hand in hand with meeting basic human needs and working for peace and justice," says Arli Klassen, MCC executive director. "Together, with Everence, we are sharing God's love and compassion for all, one tree at a time."

Previously, the Everence e-statement program had partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation, with donations going toward tree planting in a U.S. national forest and Central American rain forests. Now, through this new partnership between Everence and MCC, donated dollars will fund reforestation, fruit-tree planting and watershed-management programs in some 19 countries around the world.—*A joint release of Everence and MCC*

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Naming what divides us

The heart of the Christian life is aligning ourselves with God's love. We squander love and then turn to the Spirit to fill us with it again. Even harder than that, especially as we try to make sense of our church's current struggles, is what to do with the sinking feeling that our problem might be that we understand God's love in different and contrary ways. "Conservatives" in our church wake up at night worrying that the boundaries set up to keep us faithful may not hold. "Liberals" wake up at night worrying that the boundaries may replace the center as the basis of faithfulness. Two different ways of looking at the church and the world have arisen among us. On the one hand, we struggle to pinpoint the source of our disagreements; on the other hand, we fear naming what most deeply divides us because the breach may be too big to bridge.

Such a fundamental difference of worldviews is the only adequate explanation I can find for the visceral character of debate that has accompanied changing positions on defining practices of the church such as divorce, women in leadership and homosexuality. Today in Mennonite Church USA and Canada, homosexuality is the most emotionally laden stand-in issue for a profound set of differences in belief and practice. It is the scapegoat for much of our confusion, fear and anger about the shaking foundations of our faith. Whether or not the gospel blesses the love of gay people is a troubling issue, but it is only one expression of a wider and deeper contest between conflicting sets of assumptions by which we live. No one issue can bear the weight of all our confusion, fear and anger. Only if we find ways of identifying the underlying assumptions of our strife can we hope for reconciliation. Here is one attempt to name what is at stake.

> Today in Mennonite Church USA and Canada homosexuality is … the scapegoat for much of our confusion, fear and anger about the shaking foundations of our faith.

Let's look at four realities that shape how we see the world.

1. The tension between the authority of the Bible and the authority of the Holy Spirit

The Bible is a written record of God's revelation and our response. The Old Testament (OT) describes such events as the Hebrew exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Ten Commandments. The New Testament (NT) describes such events as the coming of Christ and the community that arose in response to him. We want to live out what Scripture teaches, but doing so always involves applying an old story to a new setting. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in. For example, in the Gospels we read that Christ came to redeem Israel. In Acts we read that Christ's redemption also includes the Gentiles. Through the Spirit's prodding, the apostolic church realized that there was room in Israel's covenant with God for the Gentiles. In his farewell discourses in John 14 (11–29) Jesus promises his disciples "another Advocate," a Presence of God who will teach them how to live a life of love after their Teacher and Friend has gone.

This means that the Bible can be the final authority for the church only when it is illuminated by the Spirit. But who is to say where the Spirit is leading? For Mennonites, confessions of faith have been models of discernment in applying the Bible to the hard questions of the day. When the church accepts the articles of a confession of faith it is saying that they come as close as is possible to describing Christ's way. Because we always "know in part," grappling with our beliefs and practices continues. This grappling has led groups across the spectrum to question and reject parts of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Here are some examples. As regards the status of women and men (Article 6), the *Confession* asserts that the rule of man over woman is the result of sin and that in redemption they are both restored to the image of God. The *Confession* concludes that God calls leaders from both genders. On the practice of Communion (Article 12) the *Confession* states that only those who are baptized are invited to the Lord's Table. On the question of sexual union (Article 19) the *Confession* asserts that it belongs only within heterosexual marriage.

The only issue on which conformity to the *Confession* is called for by our denomination has to do with the implied rejection of same-sex marriage (Article 19). One of the few departures from the *Confession* that is disciplined is when a minister presides at a same-gender union. Nothing is done when members or ministers publicly reject a Trinitarian understanding of God (Article 1). Nothing is done when members or ministers publicly reject the peace teaching (Article 8 & 22).

What is happening here? Individuals and groups are at odds about the *Confession*'s discernment of where Scripture interpreted by the Spirit leads. To be sure, no single process of discernment in a single period of time is absolute. But without the *Confession* as a referee, as a document in its own right and as a symbol of the tradition, there is no agreed-upon way of measuring faithfulness. Yet sincere people disagree about which issues in the *Confession* adequately express the leading of the Spirit today and which issues are of a church-dividing nature.

The dominant historical position has been that confessions identify those things that unite us and that must unite us to remain faithful. Our current confession stands in that tradition. It offers a permeable orthodoxy in which historic positions are affirmed but with respect for a range of interpretation. For instance, the *Confession* asserts that Christ died to save us (Article 8), adding that each of the classic ways of making sense of Jesus' death (Christus victor, substitutionary, moral influence) shed the Spirit's light on biblical teaching. Our confession seeks to set forth the essentials of the gospel as Mennonites have understood it while making room for diversity of interpretation that remains accountable to the core.

People on the left decry the abandonment of the peace position by some people on the right. … But some people on the right are also reacting to a pacifist position in which belief is often reduced to ethics.

What do we do when a significant part of the church finds the discernment set forth in the *Confession* inadequate to the needs of the day and the leading of the Spirit for the day? Do we resort to congregational autonomy? If so, are there no positions on which we must be of a common mind to faithfully live the will of God? Another approach is to say that it is relationships of trust, respect and patience that are called for to hold our denomination together. These virtues are indispensable. But can the full weight of community be carried by relationships? Aren't we accountable to truths of the sort that are interpreted in the *Confession*, which we accept at baptism?

2. More is at stake than the issue itself

We are reluctant to admit that it is not only a particular issue on which we disagree; we fear that the assumptions underlying it may be at stake. Most of us have a haunting, gut feeling that more is at stake than the issue itself when we see the passion our disagreements provoke but we can't put that gut feeling into words. Take the explosive issue of abortion. Conservatives oppose it with a passion. Part of what drives them is that they're against the taking of human life. But a pro-life position is equally a symbol of a deeper moral imperative: It is a line in the sand drawn in defense of "traditional values" as defined by right wing Republican ideology. Liberals defend abortion (sometimes on demand) because they want a way for women to get out of desperate circumstances. But they also defend abortion rights because it symbolizes a deeper moral imperative: It is a line drawn in the sand in defense of "individual rights" as defined by left wing Democratic ideology.

We fear that if we identify the depth of our differences (within families, congregations and church agencies) they will become truly unmanageable. Sometimes these debates are perpetuated by ongoing reactions by one side of the issue against the other.

To illustrate, people on the left decry the abandonment of the peace position by some people on the right. On the surface, the leftists have the authority of the historical Mennonite interpretation of Jesus' teaching on their side. But some people on the right are also reacting to a pacifist position in which belief is often reduced to ethics. The nonviolence of some Mennonites grows out of skepticism about revealed truth; all that remains for them of religion is its morality. Because the need for peacemaking initiatives is so urgent, arguments for peace and justice that are not theologically grounded have been shielded from criticism in our denominational culture. This unwillingness by centrists and leftists to make theological judgments in this realm only fuels the conservative fear that it is ultimately not the peace teaching but belief in God's self-revelation that is at stake.

3. Privileging different parts of the Bible

The third reality grows out of one of the riches of our tradition. Mainstream Mennonites of different theological vantage points have done probing and respectful work on the Bible, both on a scholarly and popular level. Most of us would agree that the preaching of the OT prophets brings us closer to the reign of God than the detailed prescriptions of the law found in Leviticus. But each school of thought goes on to privilege parts of the Bible in more contentious ways.Regarding the NT, some claim the heart of the gospel is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke (ethics); others assert that it is found in Paul and John (spirituality).

Every approach to the Bible makes use of a hierarchy of truths. Interpretations that see the ordering of society as one of God's greatest gifts privilege passages like Romans 13:1-7 ("Let every person be subject …"). People who see the radical reordering of society as a greater gift privilege passages like Acts 17:1-8 ("… there is another king named Jesus."). We need clearer criteria for why we claim that some passages are more central to God's purposes for the church and the creation than others. Otherwise we will continue to talk past one another. For example, a convinced conservative may reject the binding authority of Matthew 5:38-48 ("Do not resist an evildoer …) yet insist on the authoritativeness of Paul's condemnation in Romans 1:18-32 ("… men were consumed with passion for one another"). A convinced liberal can do the opposite. A starting point for honest discernment would be to admit that we hold different readings of the Bible, to lay out how we decide what is authoritative and how we live in response to it.

4. Mission: changing individuals and/or structures? Finally, there is the question of mission. It is of defining importance because it refuses to let us solve the problems before us simply with words. The mark of the follower of Jesus is "the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26). Being a faithful believer, being the faithful body of Christ grows out of taking a chance on God, taking the risk of living as if the kingdom has come near (Mark 1:15). Everything else is "noisy gongs and clanging symbols" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Risky living is the level playing field on which all contenders for rightly understanding the gospel meet. It does not mean, however, that truth claims are irrelevant. Let's simplify the two contending visions of mission for the sake of discussion. Is our calling to witness to Christ as the Savior of the world and to build up a church of those who confess him as Lord? Or is our calling to make common cause with all who put themselves on the line for peace and justice? Many Christians (and people who staff our church agencies) work hard to transcend that polarity. For a long time, one of our predecessor mission boards had the motto, "The whole gospel for a broken world."

Nevertheless, in our agencies, schools and congregations, people tend toward one of the extremes. On the one hand are believers who know the tyranny of sin in their own lives and have been set free from it by Christ. They know of no higher calling than witnessing to amazing grace. These people sometimes become so preoccupied with personal conversion that they forget it is only the entry point into God's purpose for the creation.

On the other hand are believers who know the tyranny of sin in the life of ghettoes and nations and are convinced that God's reign can free the world from oppression and war. They sometimes become so preoccupied with systemic change that they forget that only individuals who have been made whole by Christ can stay the course in bringing wholeness to the world. If people across the spectrum can acknowledge that what they are called to (changing structures or individuals) concerns only a part of the gospel, their ministries become complementary and mutually affirming.

These emphases become divisive when each side insists that only its way is faithful.

Those who make personal conversion all there is to the gospel—and insist that work for justice is a distraction from the church's mission—have only half a gospel.

Similarly, those who see evangelism as an offense against other truth claims—and have no heart for seeing lost people find themselves in Christ—have only half a gospel. This is where the debate about mission needs to start.

When we risk speaking and praying truthfully and charitably about how we understand the Bible and the Spirit, when we risk unpacking our unspoken, underlying assumptions, when we risk facing the selectivity with which all of us approach the Bible, when we risk a deeper understanding of evangelism and justice in the coming of the kingdom, then we will have found our way back to the path that aligns us with God's love.—*John D. Rempel is professor of historical theology and Anabaptist studies and associate director of Institute of Mennonite Studies at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.*

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Bethel student starts lunchtime grace tradition

Melissa Volk returns to campus from Camp Mennoscah with dream.

Melanie Zuercher

Melissa Volk, second from right, organized a regular time of singing the "Doxology" as a lunchtime grace on Wednesdays in the Bethel College cafeteria. Singing with her here, from left, are Bethel students Kelsey Ortman, Landon Bartel, Aaron Rudeen and Austin Unruh, prospective student Josh Booth from Goessel High School, and Bethel student Chris Riesen.

"I love God's people and the church, and I love Scripture. My call is to bring those together."

-Carmen Horst,
MDiv '10, associate pastor of James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

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After a summer in which she spent significant time as a counselor at Camp Mennoscah near Murdock, Kan., Melissa Volk returned to Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., for her senior year with an important internal question: How can I bring my camp self back to my everyday life?

One of her favorite camp experiences was the shared prayer before each meal. Volk began thinking about how she could share this with the Bethel community.

"I'm Catholic," Volk says. "We say the same prayer before every meal, and it's spoken, not sung. ... [the grace songs at camp were] a nice, different way to say that before-meal prayer. Since I've been saying the same one my whole life, I found this really interesting. I loved it. It's a very pure form of worship."

Volk had an idea: Get a table grace going sometime during lunch in the Bethel cafeteria. The first thing she did was e-mail Dale Schrag, campus pastor and director of church relations, about it.

"I was fascinated by the proposal," Schrag says. "I had some conversation with other folks. ... We determined right off the bat that if this was going to work, it needed to be carried by students, not by faculty or staff. It wasn't something we could impose."

Schrag told Volk they felt the best procedure would be for her to lead the singing or get other students to lead—perhaps some Concert Choir members

The next question: Which prayer to use? That sparked much discussion; no one wanted a prayer that was "exclusive."

"It was actually Melissa's suggestion, with which I totally concurred, that the 'Doxology' made the most sense because it was the most universal," says Schrag.

"We wanted to do lunch," Volk says, "because it is a meal that a lot of people [go to at the same time]." But having choir members was important, she adds, because "getting up in front of your peers [to sing] is really hard."

Now, when the notes of the "Doxology" sound, the normal cafeteria chatter stops for a few moments, as people join in or just listen. Volk says there are still a lot of students who don't sing, which she attributes to not very many knowing the prayer.

Volk hopes singing the "Doxology" at lunch continues.

"It would be cool if, years from now, I came back and some kids were still doing it," she says, "that it had become a tradition, that some other people thought it was important enough to include in their everyday lives also."—*Erin Bradley for Bethel College*

CALENDAR

Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society will host a ***book signing and reception*** for Everett Thomas and his novel, *Johann*, on March 17 during Celebration of Church Life. The event will be held at 3 p.m. on the Lancaster campus of Lancaster Mennonite School.

WORKERS

Koontz, Gary, was ordained in special ministries for his itinerant preaching and teaching ministry in the Northern District of Virginia Mennonite Conference at Crest Hill Community Church, Wardensville, W.V., on Nov. 27.

Shirk, Jason, was licensed as youth pastor at Metzler Mennonite Church, Ephrata, Pa., on Nov. 20.

Stucky, Alan, was ordained as pastor of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, Harper, Kan., on Dec. 4.

OBITUARIES

Ayers, Ruth L. Amstutz, 92, Bluffton, Ohio, died Sept. 25, 2011. Spouse: Wilbur Ayers (deceased). Parents: Ezra and Etta Davidson Amstutz. Children: Keith, Marilyn Beerman, John; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Oct. 1 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Bachman, Elda May Long, 95, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 11, 2011. Spouse: Harold Rufus Bachman. Parents: C. Norma and Bertha Landis Long. Children: Stanley, Walter, H. Sherwin; eight grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 17 at the Meetinghouse at Greencroft, Goshen.

Berkshire, Zona Marie Thomas, 85, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 23, 2011. Spouse: W. Glen Berkshire. Parents: Jacob Earl and Barbara Yoder Thomas. Children: W. Allen, Glenda Strong, Denise Sauder; 10 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Weavers Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Ebersole, Myron Leaster, 86, Lancaster, Pa., died Dec. 8, 2011. Spouse: Geraldine Ann Hartman Ebersole. Parents: Lester R. and Mamie Martin Ebersole. Children: Susan Elaine Ebersole, Jon Michael; four grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 17 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Eby, Naomi Lois Buskirk, 91, Harbor Springs, Mich., died Dec. 18, 2011. Spouse: John S. Eby (deceased). Parents: Royal A. and Sarah Martin Buskirk. Children: Elton, Maurice, Miriam Smith, Margaret Nolt, John M.; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 21 at Brutus Mennonite Church, Brutus, Mich.

Falb, George, 92, Dalton, Ohio, died Dec. 21, 2011. Spouse: Priscilla Miller Falb (deceased). Parents: David and Martha Brumgartner Falb. Children: Rosemary Rupp, Rebecca Oyer, Timothy, Ronald; 11 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 26 at Martins Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio.

Glanzer, Anna F. Mandel, 94, Freeman, S.D., died Dec. 23, 2011. Spouse: Eli D. Glanzer (deceased). Children: Sharon Hiebner, Ellen Pederson; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 28 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Landes, Florence Hunsberger Rittenhouse, 87, Lansdale, Pa., died Dec. 1, 2011. Spouse: William W. Landes (deceased). Spouse: Herbert M. Rittenhouse (deceased). Parents: William and Florence Stauffer Hunsberger. Children: W. Herbert Rittenhouse, Gerald Rittenhouse, R. Thomas Rittenhouse, Tim Rittenhouse, Jane Kratz, Gail Horning, John David Rittenhouse; 17 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Step-children: Darlene Hartzell, Leslie Landes, Dennis Landes, Ivan Landes, Janie Landes, William Gary Landes. Funeral: Dec. 10 at Towamencin Mennonite Church, Kulpsville, Pa.

Lehman, Dr. Earl W., 89, Bluffton, Ohio, died Sept. 24, 2011. Spouse: Edith Stuckey Lehman (deceased). Parents: Albert and Pauline Zimmerly Lehman. Children: Gene, James, Judith Lehman, Kerrie Sprunger; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Oct. 7 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Miller, John Edward, 75, Louisville, Ohio, died Dec. 12, 2011. Spouse: Patricia Miller. Parents: John J. and Orpha Yoder Miller. Children: Karla Hammen, J. Kevin, Derrick, Todd, Collin, John, Jr.; 14 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Miller, Kaitlyn Grace, Kalona, Iowa, was stillborn on Dec. 9, 2011. Parents: Ledru and Annette Yoder Miller. Sibling: Addison Miller. Funeral: Dec. 17 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Miller, Orus E., 90, Hartville, Ohio, died Nov. 27, 2011. Spouse: Katie Ann Frey Miller (deceased). Parents: Enos and Mary Yoder Miller. Children: Mary Margaret Miller, Miriam Miller, Eugene, Ellen Meyers, Shirley Violanti; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 30 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Nafziger, Mary Katherine, 86, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 8, 2011. Parents: John M. and Anna Litwiller Nafziger. Funeral: Dec. 12 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Richard, Willard Paul, 88, Aberdeen, Idaho, died Dec. 15, 2011, of complication due to a broken hip. Spouse: Ruth Ellen VanDorien Richard. Children: Bonnie McDermid, Connie Friesen, Debbie Tobias, John, Ron; 12 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Roth, Max Wayne, 82, Laguna Woods, Calif., and Wayland, Iowa, died Dec. 6, 2011, of progressive heart condition. Spouse: Berniece Graber Roth. Parents: Clarence Bud and Mabel Meyer Roth. Children: Duane, Theodore, Gordon, Byron, Courtney; 13 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 11 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Ruth, Paul Landis, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 2, 2011. Spouse: Marjorie Wienss Ruth. Parents: Arthur D. and Florence Landis Ruth. Children: Janet Ruth, Rita Rupp, Douglas, Michael; six grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 5 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Schrag, Clarice Waltner, 98, Freeman, S.D., died Nov. 21, 2011. Spouse: Elmer Schrag (deceased). Children: Phyllis Bovill, Renee Hartman, Ken, Rita Hicks; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 29 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Schwabbauer, Ivan Arthur, 75, Carolville, Iowa, died Nov. 26, 2011, of ALS (Lou Gerig's disease). Spouse: Marian Histand Troyer Schwabbauer. Parents: Arthur and Mildred Crosby Schwabbauer. Children: Debra Schwabbauer, Diane Spicer, Donald, Margaret Yoder, Rebecca Walker; 12 grandchildren. Memorial service: Dec. 16 at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa.

Stoltzfus, Miriam A. Yoder, 72, Lewisburg, Pa., died Dec. 16, 2011. Spouse: Elam R. Stoltzfus, M.D. Parents: Samuel S. and Esther Kolb Yoder. Children: Michael, Gerald, Daniel, Leticia Gehman, Krista Moser; 13 grandchildren; one great-grandson. Funeral: Dec. 21 at Buffalo Mennonite Church, Lewisburg.

Stutzman, Bernice Hostetler, 87, Louisville, Ohio, died Dec. 13, 2011. Spouse: Vernon Stutzman. Parents: Aaron and Kathryn Schmucker Hostetler. Children: Carol Tournoux, Janine Henderson, Judy Stutzman, Ed, Galen, Ron; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 17 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Swartley, Renee B. Burkholder, 56, Perkasie, Pa., died of cancer Aug. 26, 2011. Spouse: Philip Wayne Swartley. Parents: Paul G. and Miriam Thomas Burkholder. Children: Heather Renee Swartley, Erin Swartley Alletag, Amber Nicole Swartley; three grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 31 at Blooming Glen Mennonite, Perkasie.

Troyer, Arlene Stoltzfus, 89, Milford, Neb., died Dec. 22, 2011. Spouse: Orve J. Troyer (deceased). Parents: Paul and Cora Smoker Stoltzfus. Foster sons: Steve Kepford, Brian Utter; five foster grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

White, Amy Leona Martin, 98, Wellman, Iowa, died Dec. 18, 2011. Spouse: Glen White (deceased). Parents: Edward and Barbara Yoder Martin. Children: Crystal Tschantz, Cynthia Schlabaugh, Martin; one grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 21 at Powell Funeral Home, Wellman.

Yancey, Edward C., 95, Lowville, N.Y., died Dec. 12, 2011. Spouse: Bertha E. Beyer Yancey (deceased). Parents: Edward E. and Rosella Zehr Yancey. Children: Carolyn Malone, Virginia Lyndaker, Herbert, Edward, Theodore, Timothy, Gordon, John; 17 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 15 at Lowville Mennonite Church.

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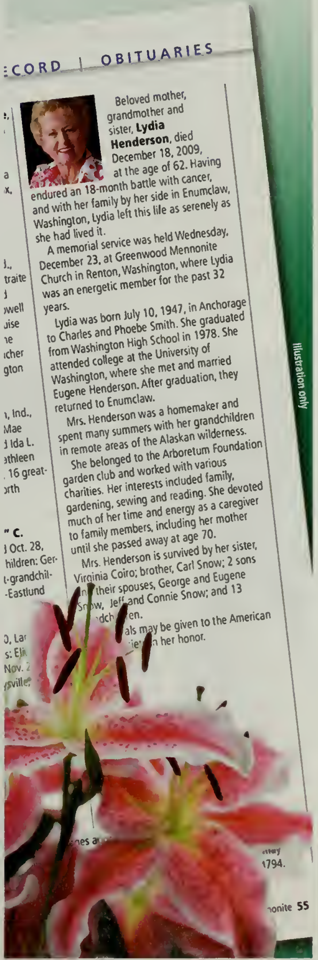

ECORD | OBITUARIES

Beloved mother, grandmother and sister, **Lydia Henderson**, died December 18, 2009, at the age of 62. Having endured an 18-month battle with cancer, and with her family by her side in Enumclaw, Washington, Lydia left this life as serenely as she had lived it.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, December 23, at Greenwood Mennonite Church in Renton, Washington, where Lydia was an energetic member for the past 32 years.

Lydia was born July 10, 1947, in Anchorage to Charles and Phoebe Smith. She graduated from Washington High School in 1978. She attended college at the University of Washington, where she met and married Eugene Henderson. After graduation, they returned to Enumclaw.

Mrs. Henderson was a homemaker and spent many summers with her grandchildren in remote areas of the Alaskan wilderness.

She belonged to the Arboretum Foundation garden club and worked with various charities. Her interests included family, gardening, sewing and reading. She devoted much of her time and energy as a caregiver to family members, including her mother until she passed away at age 70.

Mrs. Henderson is survived by her sister, Virginia Coiro; brother, Carl Snow; 2 sons [illegible] their spouses, George and Eugene Snow, Jeff and Connie Snow; and 13 [illegible]en.

[illegible]als may be given to the American [illegible] her honor.

Illustration only

RESOURCES

Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians by Luke Timothy Johnson (Eerdmans, 2011, $23) shows how the New Testament books of Luke and Acts are a literary unit that uncovers a prophetic vision of Jesus and the church and a call for today's church to embody and proclaim God's vision for the world.

Alfalfa to Ivy: Memoir of a Harvard Medical School Dean by Joseph B. Martin (The University of Alberta Press, 2011, $34.95) tells the story of one man's journey from rural origins to a highly regarded leader. Martin's Mennonite values guided him through tumultuous changes in modern medicine.

A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding Networks of Mennonite Identity, edited by Alain Epp Weaver (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $29.95) explores how Mennonite Central Committee has served as a key vehicle for inter-Mennonite collaboration from 1920 onward. More than 20 scholars from various disciplines examine how MCC has shaped expanding networks of Mennonite identity.

The True Meaning of the Last Supper: Welcoming Others: A Missional Approach to Holy Communion by Donald R. Steelberg (Westbow Press, 2011, $10) is available at Amazon.com or from the author at P.O. Box 20837, Wichita, KS 67208.

A Thousand Vessels: Poems by Tania Runyan (WordFarm, 2011, $12) is Runyan's third collection of poetry. Her poems have appeared in *The Mennonite*.

How Trees Must Feel: Poems by Chris Longenecker (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $12.95) collects poems that are textually accessible and often traditional in form yet use the ordinary to convey the extraordinary.

Sticking Points: A Novel by Shirley Kurtz (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $18.95) details a domestic world with dazzling specificity.

The Sometimes Daughter: A Novel by Sherri Wood Emmons (Kensington, 2012, $15) focuses on the unbreakable tie between one girl and her often-absent mother. This is Emmons' second novel. Her first was *Prayers and Lies* (Kensington, 2011).

City of Tranquil Light: A Novel by Bo Caldwell (Henry Holt and Co., 2010, $25) draws on the experience of Mennonite missionaries in northern China during the turbulent first half of the 20th century.

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Bluffton University invites applications and nominations for the position of ***vice president for student life and dean of students*** to begin summer 2012. The person in this position reports to the president as a member of the university's senior leadership team and functions as the university's chief student affairs officer. Responsibilities include serving as dean of students, supervising staff and functions within Bluffton's student and residential life division and providing strategic leadership and vision for programs, services, planning, and assessment to foster student development and success.

See http://www.bluffton.edu/about/employment/vp-studentlife/ for additional information, position qualifications and application details. Review of applications will begin Feb. 15 and will continue until the position is filled. EOE.

Head cook and ***lifeguards*** at **Camp Keola**. Camp Keola is a member of Mennonite Camping Association and is located at beautiful Huntington Lake in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. www.campkeola.org. Keola is a seasonal camp, open from approximately mid-June through August and during weekends through October. Camps range from 60 to 150 people. To apply, complete application found at www.campkeola.org; click on "employment." Questions to larry@campkeola.org.

'Bicycle the San Juans.' Celebrate the beauty of God's creation and **benefit MCC**! Cycle five days through outstanding scenery and diversity of terrain on the "paradise islets" of the Evergreen State. Aug. 5-10, 2012. For registration information, contact Trish Hershberger-Handrich, 503-201-7605 or trish.handrich@gmail.com.

BIPOLAR *genetics*
RESEARCH STUDY

Researchers are looking for genes that may affect a person's chances of developing bipolar disorder.

You can participate in this research study if you are over 18, have a bipolar diagnosis, or have a family member with bipolar disorder. This study includes a telephone interview (2-4 hours) and a blood sample (bloodwork from your physician.) **Contact Diane Kazuba 301-496-8977, 1-866-644-4363, email: kazubad@mail.nih.gov** TTY: 1-866-411-1010 or Write to Diane Kazuba, National Institute of Mental Health, Building 10, Room 3D41, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-1264

National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health
Department of Health & Human Services www.clinicaltrials.gov Protocol No: 80-M-008

No travel necessary. No cost to participate. Financial compensation provided.

Dean of students: **Rosedale Bible College**, an accredited two-year college in central Ohio operated by the Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC), is seeking candidates for the position of dean of students, to begin summer 2012. The dean of students oversees the nonacademic elements of the student experience, including student activities, dorm life, community service, chapel programs, student nurture and spiritual development. The dean is also a member of the college's Administrative Council and will be expected to teach part-time. The ideal candidate will be a Christian who is in agreement with the CMC statements of faith, has proven leadership and ministry experience and possesses at least a master's degree in a field relevant to the college's curriculum. Inquiries, resumes and nominations should be sent to: President Dan Ziegler, Rosedale Bible College, 2270 Rosedale Rd, Irwin, OH 43029 or to dziegler@rosedale.edu. 740-857-1311.

Ten Thousand Villages seeks values-driven ***CEO*** with organizational leadership and international experience to lead mission of creating opportunities for artisans in developing countries to earn income through long-term fair-trading relationships and a growing network of more than 150 U.S. retail outlets. Quantitative analytical, strategic planning and inspired decision-making abilities. Marketing or retail experience preferred. Successful candidate will provide vision and direction for long-term success and growth of North America's leading fair-trade retailer. If you are a qualified individual interested in this leadership opportunity at Ten Thousand Villages, please review the job description on our website at: http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/about-careers/ and submit your resume and letter of interest to CEOsearch@tenthousandvillages.com.

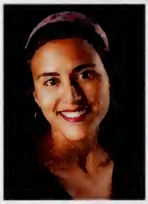
Registrar at **Bethel College**, North Newton, Kan., is currently accepting applications for the position of registrar, to begin by July 2, 2012. This full-time position combines 75 percent time in the registrar's office and 25 percent time in additional teaching duties. Review of applications will begin Feb. 13 and continue until the position is filled. For job description and details see http://www.bethelks.edu/bc/careers/openings.php. AA/EOE

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. See advertisement on page 54. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. In the Books section type the author's name. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org. See advertisement on page 54.

ONLINE

Do I fit in the Mennonite church?



Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz lives in San Antonio, Texas.

These last few months I've been sitting quietly with this question: Do I fit in the Mennonite church? Is there a place for me here? Before you assume this article ends with a resolution of my doubt, let me reassure you that it does not. I never imagined I'd arrive to this place, and I invite you into my struggle.

Maybe my original Mennonite optimism was born when I recognized the strides the church had already overcome when I met other female church leaders, and I knew that with great pains, women now were welcomed and invited to serve. This for me was a breath of fresh air, since I came from a different church experience.

Then there was multiculturalism and the tension I witnessed between Latinos and Anglo Mennonites. Even though that continues to be a rough and not terribly honest conversation, I still had some level of peace that this process would eventually find a working plateau to grow into. I looked forward to serving in this challenge of diversity.

In a community where many are conflict avoiders, I unintentionally carry conflict in my back pocket.

But where I was sideswiped, where the big question about my identity around being a Mennonite faced its greatest challenge, was inexplicably something I could not completely change—my personality.

Last September, I was graciously given the opportunity to participate in the Values-Based Leadership Program. VBLP for the last 10 years has guided leaders within an Anabaptist perspective into the hard work of reflection and transformation informed by church/work communities into leaders who can stimulate and empower others around them. As part of the program, we completed a personal profile questionnaire that unveiled my tears, confusion and sorrow about who I am in the Mennonite church.

According to the profile, I was considered part of the quadrant known as Dominance. This means that I enjoy working through the challenges presented to me and through swift analysis can see a solution through which forward-moving action seems the best way to handle the situation.

I may frighten some, while others may say, "but we need people like you" (which I've heard many times). I've met people in the Germanic Mennonite culture who identify themselves without apology with this personality as well. But the difference is this: Most of those people I've met are men. It's a lot easier to accept a man like me than a woman. Whereas in church leadership positions I may have excelled, in community, we all failed. In a church where community building is a high value, my personality, with its inevitable blind spot of considering others, created an even greater need for conversations that may include confrontation and conflict.

As I've processed this, I've heard from other minority Mennonites that to be in this church, you must act tame. "Find yourself a small group to be all you are, but while doing church, you're to be the quiet version of you and not make waves." The problem is that when I show up, I bring the ocean. In a community where many are conflict avoiders, I unintentionally carry conflict in my back pocket. It's just a part of who I am and not meant to be mean nor hurtful.

On a personal level, I unknowingly failed to cultivate and nourish relationships in ways most women do in my Mennonite congregation. Add to that that I'm an opinionated, in-your-face Latina and it's easy to see how another wall has been erected. I've been in a lonely place for a long time.

Back to my original question. Can someone like me really be a part of this church? Can I be part of a community that refuses to fight for each other, which may mean fighting against each other to find our oneness again? How long can a community exist where there is fear of conflict or there are those who stay silent, sacrificing themselves for the others?

For now, I'm tired and finding God's renewal strengthened within me through solitude and prayer. My future is uncertain, while my faith in Anabaptism remains strong. I hope I find others who are willing to join me in the honest mess of community, where conflict is welcomed and differences sought out. TM

BEST FILMS OF 2011

1. **The Tree of Life**
2. **Of Gods and Men**
3. **Margin Call**
4. **The Descendants**
5. **Hugo**
6. **Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy**
7. **Poetry**
8. **Le Quattro Volte**
9. **Higher Ground**
10. **Buck**

—*Gordon Houser*

BEST BOOKS OF 2011

Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life by Richard Rohr

Higher Gossip: Essays and Criticism by John Updike

Justice in Love by Nicholas Wolterstorff

Train Dreams: A Novel by Denis Johnson

The Tiger's Wife: A Novel by Téa Obreht—*gh*

FILM REVIEWS

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (R) is set in the bleak days of the Cold War. Espionage veteran George Smiley is forced from semi-retirement to uncover a Soviet agent within MI 6. This excellent adaptation of John Le Carré's novel features an outstanding performance by Gary Oldman as Smiley. The film reveals the tension and compromise, not the glamour or romance, of the spy game.—*Gordon Houser*

War Horse (PG-13) tells the story of a boy who joins the army when his horse is sold to the calvary in World War I. It is beautifully filmed, and the acting is fine. But the sentimental setup is too predictable, and some of the actions of the horse go beyond credulity. The middle section is the strength of the film, which shows the muck and horror of war and presents the perspective of both British and German soldiers.—*gh*

Catholicism, PBS and Tebowmania

For anyone who laments the lack of religious content on television, look no further than *Catholicism*, a 10-episode documentary on PBS.

Set in 50 locations in more than 16 countries, the series examines major themes, such as the person of Christ, the mystery of God, the Virgin Mary, Peter and Paul, the "missionary thrust of the Church," the liturgy and the Eucharist, prayer and spirituality and the saints, says Father Robert Barron, head of Word on Fire media and the visionary behind the series.

Barron, a priest of the Chicago archdiocese who teaches faith and culture at Mundelein Seminary, is unapologetic in his advocacy of the Catholic faith. He even says he hopes the films will be used "as a tool of evangelization for everybody."

Many will object that public television is not the place for a series promoting Catholicism. Perhaps, but the series (I've watched only three episodes thus far) is also educational. And the early episodes especially focus on Christian beliefs—catholic (universal) as well as Catholic.

If PBS were presenting a series on Buddhism or Hinduism, there may not be much debate. Given the religious ignorance of most Americans, learning about Catholicism or other faiths could help us be more civil citizens.

That is, it could if more people watched PBS. One can only hope.

The first episode, filmed largely in Israel, looks at Jesus' life, then moves on to the spread of the Christian faith throughout the Roman Empire. It focuses on Old Testament themes that Jesus fulfills as the promised Messiah: gathering the tribes, cleansing the temple of God, the Davidic warrior, dealing with the enemies of Israel, reigning as the Lord of all nations.

Barron is an engaging guide who clearly loves to teach. He offers interesting perspectives on the faith and responds to the questions of skeptics without sounding condescending. Further, given such terms as warrior, dealing with enemies and reigning as Lord, it's refreshing to see Barron's emphasis on Jesus' nonviolence.

The second episode explores the mystery of God. Barron is clearly an apologist, as he presents the Christian faith to its skeptics. He says, "The God that most atheists deny I would also deny"—a God that is an item in the universe or is in competition with us.

Later in the episode, Barron says, "God orders all things sweetly." God is nonviolent, he goes on, and the doctrine of creation fits well with the moral teaching of Jesus.

The series takes Barron to sites around the world to illustrate the topic he's addressing. For example, when he discusses the problem of evil, he is outside the Auschwitz concentration camp. The series also shows stunningly beautiful scenes to illustrate God's creation.

While there is much to learn from this series, and its content clearly presents a gospel message, few will see it. Millions more are glued to football, as (of this writing) the Super Bowl is weeks away.

Millions more have been caught up in what's been called Tebowmania. For those living on another planet, this term derives from Tim Tebow, quarterback for the Denver Broncos and author of the book *Through My Eyes*. An outspoken evangelical Christian, he celebrates touchdowns he's involved in by getting down on a knee and praying, a gesture now called Tebowing.

Many love him; others hate him. Either way, they're paying more attention to him than to the exploration of the Christian faith presented on PBS.

Gordon Houser, associate editor of The Mennonite

Continued from page 29

Of all the compelling and surprising statements Jesus made, one that likely provided more questions than answers is found in Luke 9. Jesus instructed his disciples to go out in pairs. One day they saw someone outside their inner circle practicing ministry independent of how they had been instructed. Think of it as a clash of denominations or religions. Jesus, however, was not the least bit threatened by what so upset the disciples, and he said, "for whoever is not against us is for us."

Jesus was not the least bit threatened by what so upset the disciples, and he said, "for whoever is not against us is for us."

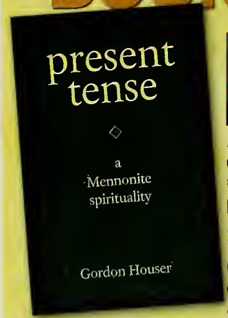
My Muslim friend Hadad is not against me. The Catholic friend I dined with is not against me. Is it possible the best approach toward those we differ with is to first give up our fears about them and what they believe? Years ago my faith felt stronger in keeping a safe distance from them. These days, my faith has found a resting place, as the old hymn says, "not in device or creed."

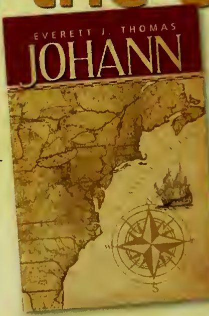
If we could allow the dust of our singular convictions to settle, we would find an image of common faith reflected in our faces. Some of the pain I have felt in ministry comes from my failure to listen to opponents without fear and suspicion, and when others have rejected me for asking hard questions. When it's all said and done, can't we recognize we are on the same path, serving the same Lord and too busy with kingdom work to get tripped up in the fine arguments?

Once I saw on a Christian TV program a vibrant hand-raising worship service in a church that years ago shunned outward emotional expression. The church still held to its core convictions, but in this area of worship, it moved in a new direction and seemed happy about it. Someone, perhaps the pastor, arrived at a crossroads in which he concluded, "We have nothing to fear in giving up the old and embracing the new." Sam Keen, in his book *In the Absence of God*, writes, "Nothing shapes our lives so much as the questions we ask, refuse to ask or never dream of asking."

Responding to differences, we can insist on our own brand of theology, our own preferences. Or we can follow Jesus in a restful, unthreatened approach that does not insist on uniformity but responds, "Whoever is not against us is for us."

Tim Schultz is pastor at Aurora (Ohio) Mennonite Church.





Books from the editors

Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality, by Gordon Houser, explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

$16.95

Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com

Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners

Everett Thomas' novel ***Johann*** is historical fiction describing the life of Mennonites in Pennsylvania in the 18th century as the French and Indian War unfolded.

$8.95

Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (www.lmhs.org), amazon.com or betterworldbooks.com

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
—*John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

Johann was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
—*Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

Signposts: Being and making disciples

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.—Matthew 28:19 TNIV

Wouldn't it be great if your congregation suddenly had an influx of mature believers who were generous givers, who humbly served as volunteers in much-needed church roles and whose convictions were aligned with your church's deepest beliefs and practices? Perhaps it's difficult to even dream of such an influx. It might stretch your faith to hope for a steady stream or even a small trickle. From my experience, I can safely predict that this won't happen in your congregation on any level at all.

You might ask how I can say such a bold statement. It's because such things don't just happen. I know, for example, that people don't just happen to become Christians. They are called by God and invited by others to become part of Christ's church.

Furthermore, people don't just happen to grow in their faith. They are formed in Christ and grow toward maturity as they are surrounded by caring groups of people who support them in their growth and hold them accountable for their actions.

Similarly, people don't just happen to become effective leaders. They are called by God, tapped on the shoulder and trained for leadership roles through modeling and teaching.

In the same vein, people don't just happen to become effective ministers. They are empowered for ministry by the Holy Spirit and trained for ministry through diligent study and the school of hard knocks.

Finally, new churches don't just happen to get started. They are planted by people who are called by God and supported by sponsoring individuals and congregations who wish to multiply their witness.

In reality, nothing "just happens" in the kingdom of God. The reign of God advances through a dynamic and often mysterious interaction of call and response between God and God's people. It develops through people who follow the call of Jesus to both be and make disciples. Disciple-making is such a deliberate and natural part of missional congregations that we can safely call it a basic identity trait of the missional church, as follows:

Missional character trait: The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.

Signpost: The disciple identity is held by all; growth in discipleship is expected of all.

Jesus invented discipleship, so to speak. The primary trait of a disciple is to be a learner, one who is formed in faith by following Jesus. Jesus called many disciples and named 12 of them apostles. He called them all to make disciples of still others.

Mortimer Arias points out that "in the book of Acts, ... the name 'Christian' appears only twice, while 'disciples' is used 30 times. Even if we call ourselves Christians, in reality we are Christians-in-the-making; we are still learning, still following. In fact, 'followers of the way' is another name for Christians in the book of Acts."

It's easy to lose sight of what it really means to be a Christian. We get sidetracked in church affairs—keeping the doors open, running the program, often struggling with the difficulty of getting along with other people and their problems. But to be a Christian is to be devoted to Christ as a disciple. As Hans Denck famously said, "No one can truly know Christ except he follow him daily in life."

Surely it must be an embarrassment to Jesus Christ to see people wear the name Christian without becoming a disciple. God has graciously called us to be followers of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world. Let's walk that road together into God's eternal future. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

It must be an embarrassment to Jesus ... to see people wear the name "Christian" without becoming disciples.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Ten years later

Everett J. Thomas

The official beginning date for Mennonite Church USA was Feb. 1, 2002, the day the new fiscal year began for most agencies. But most of us think of the denomination's "birthday" as that moment in the summer of 2001 when delegates at the Nashville, Tenn., assembly voted to form our national church and Mennonite Church Canada.

Nevertheless, on Feb. 1, both national church bodies will mark a decade of official existence. So what has changed on our side of the border?

- We're smaller. According to *Mennonite Yearbook*, there are now 109,000 Mennonite Church USA members in 939 congregations. That's down from 120,381 U.S. members and 1,063 U.S. congregations in 2000, the year before the vote to integrate Mennonite Church (MC) and General Conference Mennonite Church (GC).
- Some congregations switched area conferences for theological or geographic reasons. However, one requirement seems to have slowed the phenomenon: A congregation wishing to change conferences can do so only with the blessing of the conference it wants to leave.

On Feb. 1, Mennonite Church USA marks a decade of official existence.

- We have much less interaction with Mennonite Church Canada. In an article we published last July, one of the co-chairs for the Integration Committee lamented this change.

"This is one of my deepest regrets about [Integration Committee] work," said Dorothy Nickel Friesen, "and subsequent lack of Mennonite Church USA commitment to binational linkages."

- Institutions in Elkhart County, Ind., have significantly expanded their facilities, while Harrisonburg Va., got the remnant of Mennonite Publishing Network through a new binational agency called MennoMedia. Scottdale, Pa., lost the publishing ministry completely, while the former GC offices in Newton, Kan., contracted from four buildings to one.
- Dueling agencies and redundancies—across GC and MC lines—are now a thing of the past. Further, the four current agency and Executive Board staffs are working collaboratively in a way that often did not happen in the MC structure before merger. This has happened even without the GC-style centralization of the agencies the Executive Board wanted in 2007.
- "Dual-conference" congregations, the group most adamant in their call for a GC-MC merger, no longer have their members counted twice and no longer need to split their time and financial support between two ecclesial structures.
- GC and MC identities are fading as we all become MC USA members. For the first six years there were quotas for appointments to agency boards to ensure both traditions were represented. We have moved beyond such quotas.

The last decade has been a "settling in" period for Mennonite Church USA. It is doubtful the next decade will bring as many significant changes. For that we can be grateful. Now the national church structure can concentrate even more on the mission before us: discern where God is at work and then, aided by the Holy Spirit, let God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.—*ejt*

We've moved

The Indiana offices for *The Mennonite* have moved from the Mennonite Church USA Archives on the Goshen College campus to the new Mennonite Church USA office building in Elkhart. Our new address in Indiana is: 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Our email addresses and toll free number remain the same.—*ejt*

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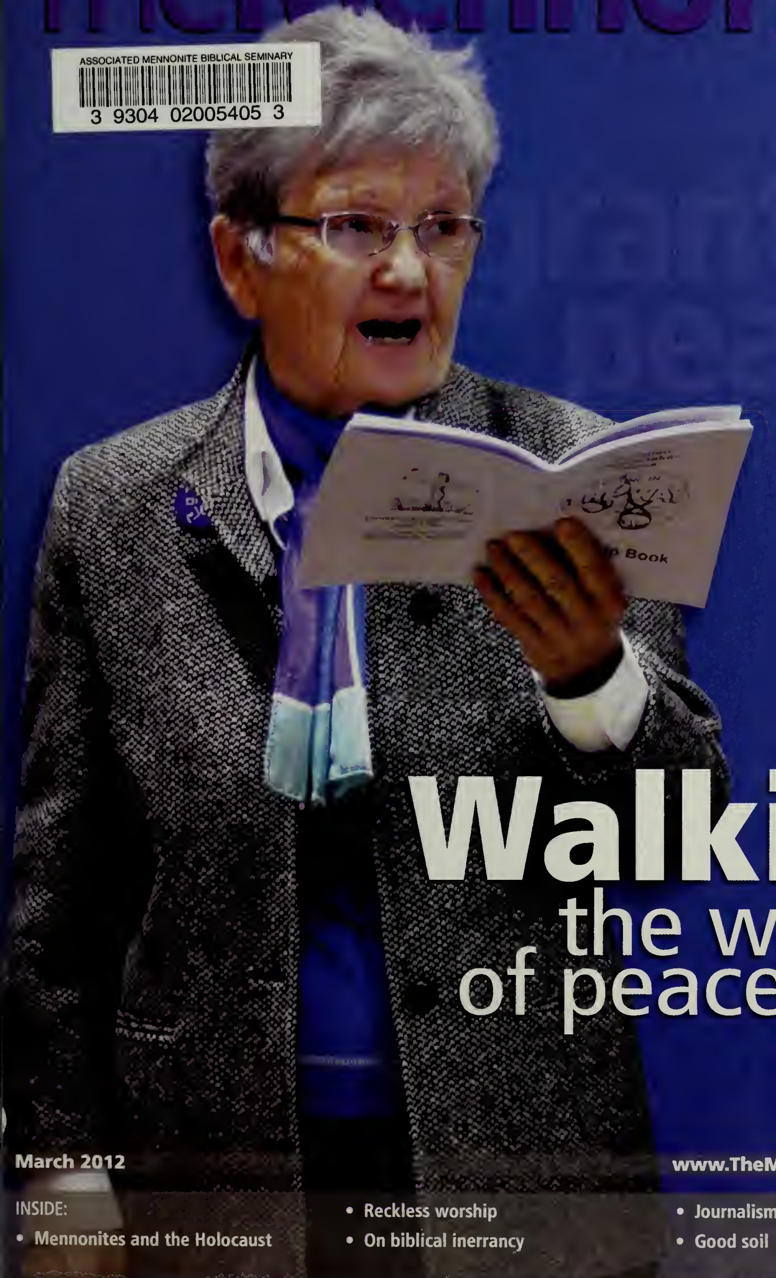

Walking the way of peace

March 2012

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- Mennonites and the Holocaust
- Reckless worship
- On biblical inerrancy
- Journalism and that tattooed girl
- Good soil

Photo: John Tirotta

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TheMennonite March 2012 | Volume 15, Number 3

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17

CONTENTS

12 Walking the way of peace
—Hedy Sawadsky with Joanna Shenk

17 Mennonites and the Holocaust
—Gerhard Rempel

23 Nearer my God to thee
—J. Denny Weaver

26 Reckless worship
—Mark Schloneger

29 Unlikely outcomes
—Roy A. Borges

32 Executive Board cuts expenses by $160,000
—Anna Groff

33 A significant drop in funding—Everett J. Thomas

35 Racial Healing group works for transformation
—Jessica Farmwald

36 Mennonite Arts Weekend draws 225—Everett J. Thomas

40 Laurelville retreat celebrates 25 years—Brian Paff

41 Rick Warren: The Anabaptists were right—John D. Roth

42 Hope trumps angst for mission leaders—Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

43 Kenyan Mennonites make history by writing it
—Debbi DiGennaro

45 College thanks employee with Habitat house
—Jacob Maldonado Nafziger and Alysha Landis

ON THE COVER: Photo by Tim Nafziger

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
33 News Analysis
47 For the Record
51 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

TheMennonite

March 2012 | Volume 15, Number 3

The Mennonite is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from, but collaborative with, other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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The Mennonite
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEB SITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1819
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. E-mail to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Food, faith and animal welfare

I admire Matthew Eaton ("The Gospel of Peace to all Creation," February) for his decision to become vegetarian as a direct result of his faith and deep connection with the other species of God's creation. For those of us with bountiful food supplies, our food choices tend to stem more from egocentric, cultural norms and convenience rather than from a conscious, faith-based and ethical commitment to the welfare of the other species that share our planet. I would really like to see more articles like this dealing with food choices, faith and animal welfare.—*Steve Houck, Pleasant Gap, Pa.*

Naming what divides us

I read with joy and delight John Rempel's article, "Naming What Divides Us" (February). That there are divisions has become evident. Being one who does not follow political party tenets, I felt a little lost at times. But all in all, it is a good article.

It is interesting, though, that the *Confession of Faith* has come into the limelight now, when it has been in existence since 1995, predating much of the integration work that was culminated in 2001/2002. I do not know whether this "new" focus is because of its being mentioned during the most recent Mennonite Church USA convention. But I suspect so.

It is interesting to consider that what came out of a general consensus in 1995 (the delegate sessions of both the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church adopted it) is now causing divisiveness and disunity.

My humble suggestion is that if we are to look or look again at this document, we would do well to look at the Scripture that was quoted in it, undergirding it. As Rempel wisely points out, it is how we interpret Scripture that contributes to what our confession of faith is and where we part company in that confession.

This is my second year of living daily with the *Confession*. The blog is called "a simple desire" and is found at http://asimpledesire.wordpress.com. I extend an invitation to one and all to come and read the blog daily.—*Carole Boshart, Eugene, Ore.*

Regarding John Rempel's, "Naming What Divides Us": Rempel first points to the tension between the authority of the Bible and the authority of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit of truth is the source of the Holy Scripture, then how can it be that the Holy Spirit's leading today would cause tension with that same Holy Scripture?

Rempel says much more is at stake than the issue itself. The fundamental, underlying assumptions identified by Rempel as conservative Republican and liberal Democrat are in neither case biblical assumptions but social in nature, pitting "traditional (American) values" against a moral imperative of "individual rights." If Rempel is right, then in both cases the Bible is used improperly to defend the imperatives of social values imposed upon Scripture, whether it be the values of left or right.

Regarding "privileging different parts of the Bible": Taking some parts of the Bible as definitive while marginalizing others is what happens when the fundamental center of values comes from some aspect of culture rather than from the administration of the Word and the work of the Spirit. It is syncretism with American culture that creates this problem.

Rempel also asks whether mission is about changing individuals and/or structures? Rempel describes the emphasis on social gospel on one side and the emphasis on individual salvation on the other as the cause of division when each side excludes the other's contribution. I doubt this is true. The real cause is a loss of the center. An Anabaptist hermeneutic begins with Jesus and makes him the center.

The right justifies violence at the level of national identity and denies the lordship of Christ over the political order. But equally with its agenda for marriage, the left does violence against the foundations of what it means to be human, even though I thoroughly sympathize with its concern for those who have been belittled, bullied and broken.—*Philip Friesen, Minneapolis*

Thanks for John Rempel's article on "Naming What Divides Us." We need more such articles rather than ignoring the elephant in the room.

As Rempel begins his third section, "Privileging Different Parts of the Bible," he notes that all of us "privilege" some parts of the Bible, see some passages as "more central" than others. But by the time he ends, he is talking about people who "reject" the authority of some passages. That shift in language might make us "conservatives" feel uncomfortable. But we should give Rempel slack here. After all, virtually all of us in Mennonite Church USA "reject" the authority of the apostles' multiple commands on the holy kiss.

Hopefully you can help us see that the "rejection" flows from an attempt to honor the whole thrust of Scripture. If the "rejection" is people trampling on Scripture, we can't find common ground with them no matter how long we dialogue.—*Harold Miller, Broadway, Va.*

Formation/transformation at center

Thanks to Dave Stevens for his excellent essay, "Christian Formation" (January). I found myself resounding an affirmative yes while reading it. Yes, we are continually moving back and forth between being gathered and sent people. Yes, we are always invited further along the I-we-all path. Yes, we have the remarkable gift of finding our own stories interwoven with the wider story of God. Yes, formation/transformation is at the center of our life together as congregations.—*Joel Miller, Cincinnati*

Professionals and laypeople

I appreciated Robert Hartzler sharing his concern about the change in our view of church leadership ("Servant Leaders or Christian Executives?" January). It reminded me of an article I clipped from the July 1989 *Gospel Herald*. Katie Funk Wiebe raised a question, "Can the Church Survive Professionalization of its Leadership?" The article compared the Mennonite church moving toward professional leadership to the Old Testament Israelites begging for a king, to be like the other nations. She asked if the church could survive the growing gap between professionals and laypeople.

Over my 50-plus years serving in the Mennonite church as a layperson, I have seen choices and changes in the way the Mennonite church and its institutions operate that cause some disappointment: the way Mennonite Church USA chooses leadership by an Executive Board rather than a representative board. The way Mennonite Property Aid groups moved away from congregational representatives to state-regulated office centers, with professional agents, resulting in some of our most vulnerable, scattered congregations being dropped from mutual aid.

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

We are publishing a 4,000-word article for the first time because the subject is so disquieting: Mennonites helping kill Jews and Communists during the Holocaust.

"Many Mennonite survivors of the Stalinist terror and anti-kulak and deportation campaigns expressed virulent hatred for both Jews and Communists as equivalent evils," says Gerhard Rempel in his article that begins on page 17.

"The Holocaust has not been fully examined as part of Mennonite history either in Russia or in Europe as a whole," Rempel says.

In contrast to the awful facts Rempel reveals, our cover story features a woman who has worked for peace for many decades. In an interview on page 12, Hedy Sawadsky explains why she left her relief and service work among Palestinians more than 40 years ago and later worked with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

The news section, which begins on page 32, includes four articles about Mennonite Church USA: financial results from the 2011 convention in Pittsburgh (page 32), an analysis of expenditures by denominational agencies over the past 20 years (page 33), an introduction to Mennonite Church USA's new office building in Elkhart, Ind. (page 34), and an update on the difficult but important antiracism work being done by the Racial Healing Task Force (page 35).

Several columns focus on the season of Lent, a time to reflect on our sins and imperfections. But Ron Adams (page 8) calls us to observe the little perfections that surround us because they are "lights along the way to perfection." In his editorial, associate editor Gordon Houser focuses on the parable of the soils in Luke 8 and says, "Lent can serve as a time to tend to our own spiritual soil" (page 56).—*Editor*

Honduran Mennonite pastor murdered

WATERLOO, Ontario—On Jan. 22, Rafael Erasmo Arevalo, a Mennonite pastor in Honduras, was attacked and killed after leading an evening worship service. Arevalo, from Santa Rosa de Copán, drove about 20 kilometers north to Veracruz, where he had led worship services for the past 10 years.

According to a report in a Honduran newspaper, *La Prensa*, Arevalo parked his car at the home of a Veracruz city councilor and then walked to the church. When he returned to his car after the worship service, he was attacked by "unknown persons." His body was not discovered until the next morning, about five kilometers from the scene of the attack.

Arevalo's funeral was held on Jan. 24 in his home community of Santa Rosa de Copán.

"We ask your prayers for his wife, children and church," wrote Erlinda Robelo, executive director of MAMA (Mujeres Amigas/Women Friends Miles Apart), an education and service agency of the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Honduras). "The church laments his premature death."

In a Jan. 24 e-mail, Robelo reported that the police still had no details of who was responsible for the murder. She indicated that Arevalo, affectionately called Mito, will be remembered for "his great spirit of service to the church and its neighbors."

Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña is one of two Mennonite World Conference member churches in Honduras.—*MWC*

Iowa pastor, wife, killed in car accident

KALONA, Iowa—Mick Murray, one of two pastors at Kalona Mennonite Church, and Julie, his wife, were fatally injured in a car accident on Feb. 4.

The Murrays were driving to their son's wrestling tournament just after noon when their vehicle hit a patch of ice and spun out of control, hitting a culvert. Their daughter Nicole was in the car with them.

She was treated for minor injuries and released from the hospital the same day. Mick died at the scene, but Julie was taken to the hospital, where she died later.

Mick, 47, and Julie, 46, are survived by four children, Brittany, 20; Nicole, 18; Chase, 16; and Jordan, 14. Julie's sister and her husband, Beth and Bill Fiordelise, will take in the children.

Central Plains conference ministers David Boshart and Tim Detweiler led the worship service at Kalona Mennonite the next day. Using the order of service already printed in the bulletin, Tim led worship and David preached the sermon. Pastor Scott Swartzendruber shared a few words of encouragement as well. Mick and Scott have co-pastored Kalona Mennonite since February 1995.

Mick and Julie were very active in ministry to youth in the church and the community. They volunteered regularly at Mid-Prairie High School and their home was always open to area youth.—*Central Plains Mennonite Conference*

Daniel Thomas/MCC

Clean drinking water

Shahanara Begum is delighted to have clean drinking water within 100 yards of her house in Bangladesh after Mennonite Central Committee partner organization, Uttaran, worked with villagers to clear sea water from the pond and install a water filter to make the water potable.—*MCC*

Norma Wiens, missionary, peace advocate, dies

NEWTON, Kan.—Norma Wiens' life took her from the plains of Kansas to the mountains of India and back again.

Wiens, an eight-year mission worker to India with the Commission on Overseas Mission (a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network), died Jan. 10, at Kidron Bethel Healthcare, after suffering from Alzheimer's for nearly seven years. She was 78.

Wiens was born June 7, 1933, to Otto and Ella (Sperling) Bachman. She met her husband, Dr. J. Wendell Wiens, while they were students at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. They were married a week after graduation on May 31, 1955, and moved to Kansas City, Kan., where they helped plant Rainbow Avenue Mennonite Church.

After 10 years in Kansas City, Norma and Wendell headed to the rural outpost of Jagdeeshpur, where Wendell worked as a surgeon at Sewa Bhawan Hospital.

She later worked as a secretary for Western District Conference and served as secretary and a member of the General Conference Mennonite Church General Board three times between 1980 and 2001.

She was also active in peace advocacy. She helped found the Newton Area Peace Center (now Peace Connections) in 1982. She joined silent protests as the white trains carrying

Chad Schilling

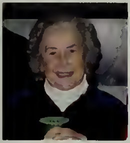
Bethel players connect with 'special' players

AJ Benton, right, Bethel College junior from San Antonio, Texas, and Eric Regier, senior from Haysville, Kan., work with Special Olympians during a Jan. 29 basketball clinic in Bethel's Thresher Gym in North Newton, Kan.—*Bethel College*

nuclear warheads passed through Kansas. She also was part of a group from Newton who helped Central American refugees find passage to Canada, sometimes housing them for months in her home.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Barbara Reber, missionary, SOOP cofounder, dies

ELKHART, Ind.—Known for her wit, passion and dedication to mission, Barbara Katherine Reber, 86, Goshen, Ind., died at her home Jan. 31 after a long battle with failing health.



Reber and Donald, her husband, served in Japan with Mennonite Board of Missions (a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network) from 1952 to 1966. They returned for several shorter assignments after retiring.

Barbara also cofounded and served several times with the SOOP program. Launched in 1990, SOOP was initially a volunteer program that focused on retirees who wanted to continue serving. The program now attracts people of all ages. During SOOP's 20th anniversary commemoration in which Reber was honored, she told Mission Network that the way elders are treated in Japanese culture inspired her to find a way to help older generations do service.

Reber was born Nov. 13, 1925, in Milford, Neb., to the late David Elmer and Elizabeth Emma (Rediger) Bender. Reber attended both Hesston (Kan.) College and Goshen (Ind.) College.

In addition to her mission service, she also worked as a bank executive in Lombard, Ill., and as executive secretary for the Women's Missionary Service Commission for the Mennonite Church.

She was a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Cheryl Pauls named CMU president

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Canadian Mennonite University has named Cheryl Pauls as the university's second president. Pauls, a faculty member of CMU, assumes her new duties Nov. 1, succeeding Gerald Gerbrandt, who retires June 30.

Pauls is a graduate of one of CMU's predecessor colleges, Mennonite Brethren Bible College, and holds a doctorate in musical arts from the University of British Columbia.

A professor in piano and music theory, Pauls is a well-established solo and collaborative pianist, known particularly for performances of new music and for multimedia worship events. She has also undertaken research projects focused on the interface of studies in music theory and performance with those in memory, physiology, liturgy and cultural expression.

From 2000 to 2007 she served as coordinator of the Music Department and played a key role in program development. Since 2008, she has been chair of the Shaftesbury campus and member of the President's Council.—*CMU*

Everence announces staff transitions

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mel Claassen, chief financial officer of Everence, plans to retire in July. CEO Larry Miller appointed Jim Alvarez, senior vice president of corporate services, to take over as CFO when Claassen departs.

Claassen has worked at Everence for 18 years, serving as CFO for the last 10 years.

Coming from previous experience as an executive in business, Alvarez has served at Everence for six years. He is a graduate of Goshen College and has an MBA from Penn State University. Alvarez is a board member for Mennonite Health Services Alliance, Greencroft Goshen, Bethany Christian Schools and IU Health Goshen.
—*Everence*

Along the way to perfection

Ron Adams is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

I have been thinking about perfect things lately. Given my tendency toward pondering the imperfect—a side effect of a lifelong relationship with depression—I figured I'd better go with it and so heeded the call to contemplate perfection and to seek it wherever it may be found.

That may seem like an odd pursuit during this Lenten season. Lent is a time for remembering our sin and its cost. A time for repentance and seeking assurance of forgiveness. A time for telling ourselves the truth about all that is broken and imperfect.

It is hardly the time to be celebrating those things that seem to us perfect, flawless, untainted blessings:

- Like the sloppy grin of a baby or the nape of her neck.
- Like an evening of laughter with good friends or a shared meal with true companions.
- Like Duane Allman's guitar work on "Live From Fillmore East" or Saint-Saen's Symphony No. 3 or a bunch of Mennonites raising the roof with good old 606.
- Like the frosted muzzle of an old dog or the swipe of a cat's whiskers along your calf.
- Like that moment you share only with your beloved, the subject of future inside jokes and knowing glances, or walking together through a misty evening.
- Like the ending of *Casablanca* or the Emerald City of Oz.
- Like the death of someone at peace with what is coming or like the tears of those left behind, heartfelt and guileless, a blend of sorrow and hope.
- Like sitting on a bench in a beer garden in Munich, watching some old men play checkers, or porpoises dancing just off shore, or that moment when the fog lifts and you can see the mountain's peak.

These are the things I've been thinking about lately. Things that seem to me perfect.

I suppose we all have our own lists. Perfection is largely subjective, which does nothing to diminish it or prevent us from arguing the case for the perfect things on our lists.

These are the things we dare not take for granted or overlook. They are the gems that make a too-often dismal path sparkle and shine. They are gifts.

One way to think about the journey of faith is that it is a movement from imperfection to perfection. As Paul put it, Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now we are in part, but then we will be whole. Perfectly reborn in the image of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ours is a journey from darkness and death to light and life. The season of Lent makes half that journey explicit, as we walk with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, from the upper room to the cross. Easter offers the other half, taking us from the cross to an empty tomb, from death to resurrection.

The future is assured. There is light at the end of the way. There is hope that all will be made new, just as God intended it, off there in the distance. We know this to be true.

But, thanks be to God, we are also blessed with signs along the way, little perfections that reveal the fulness to come, signs that, if we attend to them and read them right, give us the strength we need to keep on walking through our imperfect world.

Maybe it's not strange to spend time this Lenten season counting our blessings. Maybe it is not out of step to think about perfect things, those small but precious jewels that point to the perfection to come.

Like that moment of absolute clarity in a time of discernment. Or that flash of insight that lifts us out of the muddle.

Like the taste of cold water on a hot day.

Like bread right out of the oven.

Like the rising of the sun and its going down.

This Lenten season, I invite us to think about those rare, perfect things in our own lives. Let's write them down and reflect on them daily and give thanks. They are lights along the way to perfection. Gifts from the one who walks with us through the valley and out the other side.

Come, Lord Jesus. TM

Think about those rare, perfect things in our own lives. … They are lights along the way to perfection.

Baptist ties through the 'Aussiedler'

In the late 1980s, as Cold War tensions between East and West were beginning to thaw, thousands of German-speaking Soviet citizens emigrated from Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Kirgiz and Siberia to West Germany, where the German government welcomed them and granted immediate status as German citizens. By 2005, nearly 2.3 million of these "resettlers" ("Aussiedler") had arrived in Germany, including nearly 350,000 who had some connection either to Mennonite or Baptist identity. Although the dramatic story of the Aussiedler is not widely known in North America, it marked by far the largest wave of immigration in Anabaptist-Mennonite history.

It also brought into sharper focus a wonderfully complex story of historical and theological identity. At the beginning of the 20th century, hundreds of Mennonite villages were flourishing in colonies throughout South Russia. By the early 1920s, however, the violence of the Bolshevik Revolution, followed by the trauma of famine, mass emigration and religious persecution profoundly disrupted life in these communities.

Further purges and forced migrations by Stalin in the following decades left the Mennonite community scattered, deprived of shared institutions, religious literature or trained leaders. Yet to a remarkable degree, the Anabaptist-Mennonite witness survived. Pockets of believers, many of them with a memory of German language and culture, continued to gather for worship. During these years, contacts with other evangelical Christians—especially the Baptists—were crucial.

When these groups were finally permitted to emigrate to Germany, the Mennonite Aussiedler celebrated that journey as a kind of biblical Exodus. But life in the new, more liberal context of the West brought its own challenges. Although they were soon thriving economically—energetically creating their own schools, mission organizations and relief initiatives—theologically the Aussiedler often had more in common with their Baptist neighbors or conservative evangelical groups from the United States than they did with the established Mennonite churches in Germany.

Thus, for example, in 2005, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas, a flagship school of conservative Southern Baptists, entered into a formal partnership with Bibelseminar Bonn (BSB), a leading Mennonite Aussiedler Bible school. Over the past decade, SWBTS has hosted numerous BSB students on its campus, sent faculty to teach courses at BSB, and developed several shared degree programs.

Yet ties of both Aussiedler and Baptists to the Anabaptist tradition have not been forgotten. Last year, BSB created a new Institute for History and Theology with a strong focus on Anabaptist-Mennonite themes. A museum on the campus of the Aussiedler primary school in Detmold clearly anchors the group's Russian-German identity within a Mennonite context.

Closer to home, on Jan. 30-31, SWBTS hosted its third annual "Radical Reformation Day" to celebrate the first Anabaptist baptisms on Jan. 21, 1525. In addition to the 500 attendees at a conference on "Anabaptism and Contemporary Baptists," Paige Patterson, president of SWBTS and popular hero of the conservative ascendancy within the Southern Baptist Convention, extended a special welcome to 25 Aussiedler Mennonite and Baptist pastors visiting from BSB, and several Mennonite historians from the United States. In his address to the group, Rick Warren, the well-known Baptist pastor and author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, expressed effusive appreciation for Anabaptist understandings of mission, discipleship and ecclesiology, and he concluded by admonishing Baptist pastors assembled at the gathering, to "study the Anabaptists. ... We have in these great saints and martyrs an understanding of what it means to be Christlike that nobody else has understood so clearly." Malcolm Yarnell, associate professor of systematic theology, echoed Warren's words: "SWBTS hopes to demonstrate that the 16th-century Anabaptists still have a thing or two to teach contemporary Baptists about the radical nature of Christian discipleship."

Though not all theological questions have been resolved, these encounters, extending across historical time and theological distance, are a reminder that God's Spirit is alive and moving in unexpected places. The hospitality I experienced at SWBTS, at BSB and among Aussiedler congregations was warm and genuine. What more is there for us to learn from these encounters? What might the Spirit be telling us? TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

God's Spirit is alive and moving in unexpected places.

Bias in bankruptcy hurts African Americans

Most of us acknowledge that racism is a huge problem in our country. But we often don't get in touch with the actual cost of this to many African Americans and other racial/ethnic people.

In a Jan. 20 article in the *New York Times,* Tara Siegel Bernard reports that according to a new study, "Blacks are about twice as likely as whites to wind up in the more onerous and costly form of consumer bankruptcy as they try to dig out from their debts."

This turned out to be the case "even when the researchers adjusted for income, homeownership, assets and education." While lawyers would no doubt deny there was any conscious bias, the numbers indicate that they were disproportionately steering blacks into a process that was not as good for them financially.

Bernard points out that "the vast majority of debtors file under Chapter 7 of the bankruptcy code, which typically allows them to erase most debts in a matter of months. It tends to have a higher success rate and is less expensive than the alternative, Chapter 13, which requires debtors to dedicate their disposable income to paying back their debts for several years."

As part of a study of racial differences in bankruptcy filings, Robert M. Lawless, a bankruptcy expert and law professor; Dov Cohen, a psychology professor; and Jean Braucher, a law professor; conducted a survey of bankruptcy lawyers. It found that these lawyers were much more likely to steer black debtors into a Chapter 13 than white filers, even when they had identical financial situations.

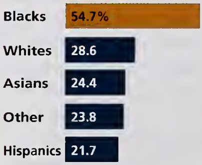
Bernard writes that Neil Ellington, executive vice president of Consumer Education Services, a credit counseling agency in Raleigh, N.C., was not surprised by these findings. He says, "The same underlying issues that created the problem in mortgage lending, with minorities paying higher interest rates than their white counterparts having the same loan qualifications, are present in all financial fields."

Lawless (yes, that is his name) does not think there is an overt conspiracy. However, he says, in a complex system, "these biases can play out, and the people within the system don't see the pattern." That is part of the hidden nature of racism.

Chapter 13 is not always an inferior choice, notes Bernard. "Many distressed borrowers go that route because they may be able to save their homes from foreclosure. But even that does not explain away the difference: among blacks who did not own their homes, the rate of filing for Chapter 13 was still twice as high as the rate for other races."

There are other implications of this trend. One, Chapter 13 plans are more likely to fail than Chapter 7 ones. Two, the attorneys' fees for the more labor-intensive Chapter 13 are more than double the charge for a Chapter 7. But some debtors will pursue a Chapter 13 because they can pay the fee over time, unlike in a Chapter 7, which typically requires a payment before the case is filed.

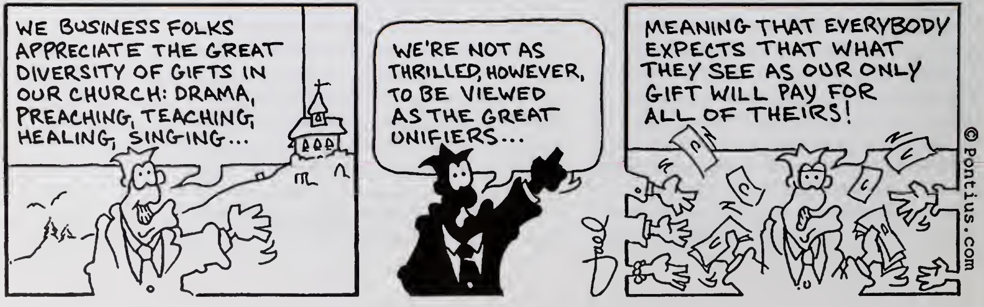
One part of the project surveyed 2,400 households nationwide who filed for bankruptcy in 2007. A second part came from a survey sent to lawyers asking them questions based on fictitious couples who were seeking bankruptcy protection.—*Gordon Houser*


Chapter 13 bankruptcy filings as a share of total by group
Based on the 2007 Consumer Bankruptcy Project

Source: "Race, Attorney Influence and Bankruptcy Chapter Choice," by Jean Braucher, Dov Cohen and Robert M. Lawless, Journal of Empirical Legal Studies

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


WE BUSINESS FOLKS APPRECIATE THE GREAT DIVERSITY OF GIFTS IN OUR CHURCH: DRAMA, PREACHING, TEACHING, HEALING, SINGING...
WE'RE NOT AS THRILLED, HOWEVER, TO BE VIEWED AS THE GREAT UNIFIERS...
MEANING THAT EVERYBODY EXPECTS THAT WHAT THEY SEE AS OUR ONLY GIFT WILL PAY FOR ALL OF THEIRS!
Joel
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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “I can’t protect my own child without confronting our nation’s energy policy and transportation systems and without protecting the plankton in the ocean that produces the oxygen that he breathes.” —Sandra Steingraber, author of *Raising Elijah: Protecting Our Children in an Age of Environmental Crisis*, in *Christian Century*

U.S. Muslims don’t want Shariah either

North American Muslims are more than satisfied with the secular legal system and do not want a set of parallel courts for Islamic law, according to a new study of U.S. and Canadian Muslims by a Washington-based think tank. The study, by University of Windsor law professor Judy Macfarlane for the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, indicates that Muslims are just as unwilling to accept Islamic law as non-Muslims.—*Religion News Service*

Obesity beyond America

“It is no longer just the inhabitants of the rich world whose waistlines are spreading dangerously,” says *The Economist*. “Though 40 percent of its 50 million live off less than $2 a day, South Africa has become one of the world’s fattest countries.” The magazine cites studies claiming that six out of 10 South Africans are overweight or obese, as are a quarter of teenagers and one in six children under age 9. The reasons? Rapid urbanization, less physically demanding work, the spread of TV and a dietary shift from home cooking to rich, processed foods. “The country’s fast-food industry is booming,” the magazine notes.—*The Marketplace*

U.S. prison stats

- Number of U.S. prisoners per 100,000 Americans in 1980: **220**
- Number of U.S. prisoners per 100,000 Americans in 2010: **731**
- Number of men in solitary confinement in U.S. prisons: **50,000**
- Number of U.S. prisoners raped each year: **more than 70,000**

—*The New Yorker*

The benefits of choral singing

Choral singing is the most popular and durable arts-related participatory activity in the United States, involving 28.5 million people in about 250,000 chorus groups. It also has a great effect on people’s happiness. In an Australian study in 2008, choral singers on average expressed greater happiness than the general public, even when those singers were carrying greater burdens than the average person not singing in choirs. The benefits in particular come from the fact that it is a social activity, which gives people a sense of belonging.—*Christian Century*

Homeless subject to physical violence

Nearly one in five clients of Christian rescue missions said they were victims of physical violence within the past year, a 6 percent jump from the previous year, according to a new survey. “It’s quite possible that the uptick in physical violence … is due to a friend or family member’s feeling of desperation and helplessness accompanying their unemployment and underemployment,” says John Ashmen, president of the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions.—*Religion News Service*

62%

of farmers in the United States did not collect subsidy payments in 2007

74%

of subsidies were collected by 10 percent of farms from 1995 to 2009—*Yes! Magazine*

Rape rampant in U.S. military

The Department of Defense estimates that more than 19,000 military men and women were sexually assaulted by fellow troops in 2010 while serving in the United States armed forces. At least 20 percent of servicewomen and 1 percent of men—an estimated 500,000 troops—have experienced sexual trauma while serving. A 2009 study shows that only 8 percent of military sex offenders are prosecuted.—*from* The Invisible War, *a documentary film shown at the Sundance Film Festival*

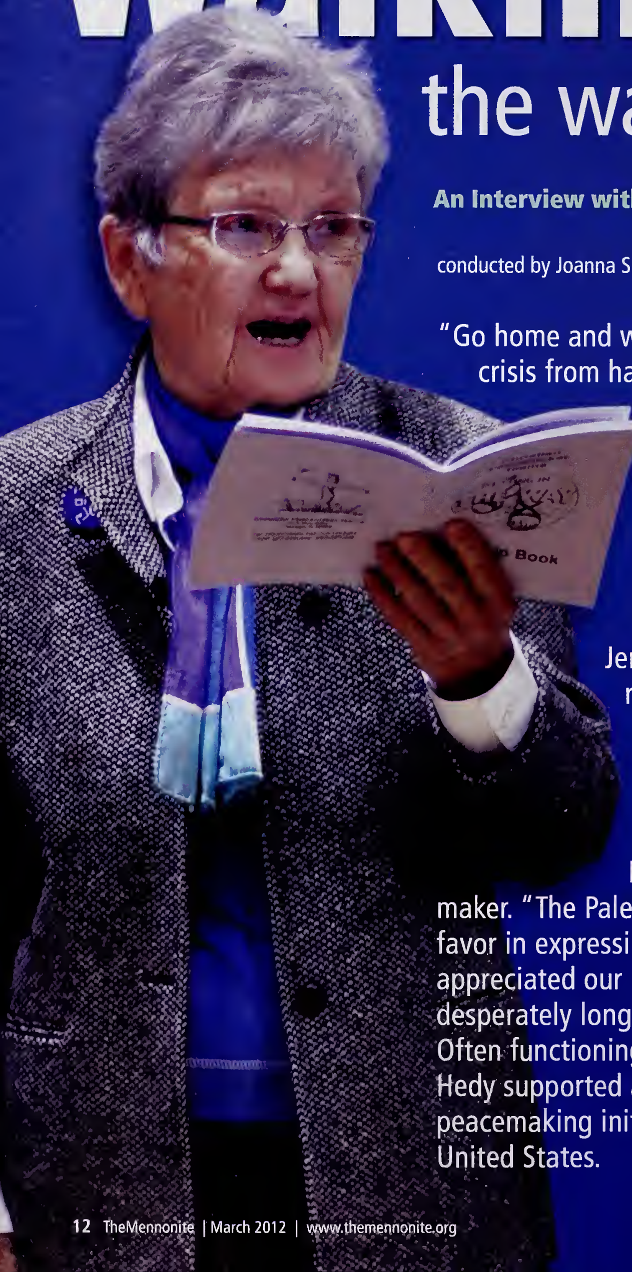
10 brain-based learning laws that trump tradition

1. Brain science trumps traditional education.
2. Emotions trump facts.
3. Talking trumps listening.
4. White space trumps information dumps.
5. Images trump words.
6. Writing trumps reading (and listening).
7. Movement trumps sitting.
8. Shorter trumps longer.
9. Different trumps same.
10. Insight trumps knowledge.
—jeffhurtblog.com

Walking the way of peace

An Interview with Hedwig Maria (Hedy) Sawadsky

conducted by Joanna Shenk



"Go home and work for peace. Stop the refugee crisis from happening. Stop the war." These words spoken to Hedy Sawadsky by a dear Palestinian friend in Jerusalem in 1970 were pivotal for her career. She was serving as a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) relief worker in Amman, Jordan, and in Jerusalem, with Palestinian refugees. What her friend meant was, "You need to work at the root causes of the violence that create so much suffering for us." This message is part of Hedy's lifelong work as a peacemaker. "The Palestinian people did me a huge favor in expressing their true feelings. They appreciated our relief work but were also desperately longing for a peaceful and just life." Often functioning in behind-the-scenes ways, Hedy supported and continues to support many peacemaking initiatives in Canada and the United States.

Now in her 80s, Hedy has completed 25 years of service on the Christian Peacemaker Teams steering committee. In this interview, she reflects on her formation, her work with many Christian groups committed to justice, and the importance of divine obedience.

I understand your own family needed to flee from the former Soviet Union. How did that background help set the stage for your work with peacemaking and refugee work?

It was an identification par excellence. My parents were refugees, too. Having emigrated in the 1920s, they often expressed their gratitude. Canada contrasted with the hardships, poverty and lack of freedom in their Ukrainian homeland. For six years our father was essentially homeless, and our mother and her family experienced the shooting of her brother as well as a famine.

One thing that came out of their experience of suffering was a commitment to have their children educated. Their words were, "They can't take that from you." They supported us in our education, even though it came at a cost. We were poor. All four of us—my sisters, brother and I—had the opportunity to attend Christian boarding schools in Ontario. How grateful I am for their sacrifices! It was in my time at boarding school that I made a public commitment to Christ.

Our parents were also respectful of our choices to follow our vocational callings. Their strong Christian faith and their creative, adventuresome spirits contributed to this philosophy. From them we learned the virtues of hard work and that life is often a struggle. In the end, both parents lived 102 years. When quizzed about their longevity, the response was "God's grace."

Having grown up in rural Niagara, Ontario, then, how did you find your way to the Middle East?

After high school I attended and graduated from Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University), then taught in the Rosthern (Saskatchewan) Bible School for several years. I participated in MCC summer voluntary service stints in two Canadian psychiatric hospitals, followed by working with Harvey Taves in the MCC office in Waterloo, Ontario. An inner call then led to a year at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., followed by graduation from Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Further discernment led to work in a Mennonite church in Ontario and to teaching in a Mennonite high school.

While working in these church-related settings, I intersected with people who had overseas experience. In my late 30s, the time seemed right to apply for service overseas. Soon I heard from MCC and agreed to go to the Middle East.

In the summer of 1968, I found myself in Amman, Jordan, a year after the Six-Day War between the Israelis and Egypt, Jordan and Syria. As a result of the war, hundreds of refugees fled east across the Jordan River and were living in tent camps in Jordan. MCC pioneers Olga and Harry Martens had arrived a year earlier and set the stage for a new MCC unit to continue the work.

In the summer of 1968, I found myself in Amman, Jordan, a year after the Six-Day War.

My responsibilities included training Palestinian women for kindergarten teaching and women's activity centers in the barren camps. Respect developed as we MCCers became friends with refugees and others, most of whom were Muslims. Thawabeh, one of these friends, gave me a beautiful Palestinian fellaheen, or peasant dress, that she and her mother had made with hand-stitched needlework designs. I still cherish it.

It felt like a gift of God's guidance and grace to be transferred to Jerusalem for my second year in the Middle East. How special to be living in the land where Jesus walked! While working in the MCC needlework shop, I met Palestinians, who prepared the needlework, as well as Israelis and visitors from elsewhere. The horizons of my consciousness expanded ecumenically with the people working in non-governmental organizations and as I visited historical and biblical sites in this land called "holy."

I also learned to appreciate that there are two sides to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The imbalance of power seems to be against the Palestinian people, who continue to live under occupation. With others I am hopeful that the longed-for reconciliation will be realized among all the "children of Abraham."

It is from this place that my Palestinian friend courageously issued the call, "Go home, Hedy, and work for peace." I have never forgotten it.

What was it like to return to North America following these formative experiences in the Middle East?

While my consciousness had been raised, I realized many people in North America saw things differently. Soon after returning to Canada and sharing the Middle East story in my area, I received a call to work at a church in Nebraska. As Christian education director in that large multigenerational Mennonite church, I was able to share my passion for the Middle East. It was a joy to wear my Palestinian dress, show slides and tell stories of what I had experienced there.

At about the same time, my mind and heart increasingly made connections with the inherent contradiction of praying for peace and paying for war via "war taxes." How could I, a follower of the Prince of Peace, justify paying for militarism and the building of weapons with my tax dollars? Indeed, these weapons might be used to harm or even kill my friends in the Middle East and people in other places. Increasingly my conscience was bolstered by biblical convictions.

I continued wrestling with the question, How can we Mennonites continue being the quiet in the land when the world is full of violence?

I struggled with others who were also trying to find clarity on this issue. Later I worked in a Mennonite church in Pennsylvania where my role included teaching the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) to ecumenical women's groups and to young people.

Thus, while living in the state of the Quaker William Penn and delving deeper into the Scriptures as well as the 16th-century Anabaptist witness, the path became clearer. For me the way to go was to live below the war-taxable level.

After considerable discernment, the church's education committee proposed to the church leadership that I would continue in my position but would be paid as a person in Mennonite Voluntary Service so as to keep my salary under the taxable level. There was some resistance by the church leadership to my becoming a voluntary service worker. Even though there was strong verbal affirmation for our Anabaptist peace position, it was not acceptable to church leadership for me to take this stance and commit to living more simply while still holding the same position.

My resignation meant that I had six months before my two-year contract was up. I continued wrestling with the question, How can we Mennonites continue being the quiet in the land when the world is full of violence?

Where did you go from there?

It so happened that one of the church members needed a ride to Elkhart, Ind., to attend seminary. Since my car was available, I drove and found myself also taking the Greek summer course with Professor Gertrude Roten. That began a triple focus, lasting three years. First, the "refresher" courses in biblical foundations for peacemaking—it had been 15 years since my graduation from seminary. Second, my part-time work with Elkhart's poor at Church Community Services. And third, together with others in the Mennonite community, participating in peace ventures at militarized sites. We held vigils and prayed and joined in nonviolent peace witnesses.

Late in 1977, I was preparing to be part of a witness in Washington, D.C., called the "Feast of the Holy Innocents" (Matthew 2). After picking up apples in Goshen for the trip, I had a horrendous accident, hit by a drunk driver. My car flipped and overturned in the middle of rush-hour traffic. Miraculously I came out fairly unscathed.

A Mennonite friend who saw the speeding truck prayed for whoever might be hit. I've wondered, Did her prayers keep me alive? It was also amazing that the carload of us who went to Washington used Marlin Miller's car, since mine was totaled. He was the seminary president at the time. Providing his car was a strong affirmation of our peace witness venture.

As some Mennonites became more involved in nonviolent direct actions for a more peaceful and just planet, debate was also going on among North American Mennonites about being "the quiet in the land." Was nonresistance enough when nuclear weapons were being built and deployed?

During my time in Elkhart, I forged solid relationships based on common commitments to more active peacemaking. We held retreats and times of contemplation as we tried to discern the will of God. Eventually Mary and Peter Sprunger-Froese and I moved to Colorado Springs, Colo., to be part of a "resistance and assistance" peace community.

We joined other Mennonites and Catholics, supporting a soup kitchen and a hospitality house in the spirit of the Catholic Worker. At times we were drawn to divine obedience, in the spirit of the midwives of Exodus 1 and the apostles in Acts

5. These actions, also known as civil disobedience, happened at times at bomb-making plants as well as at other manifestations of the military-industrial complex. Often these actions were preceded and enveloped by prayers, worship and community-building.

At some point along the pilgrim way, I realized I resonated with what I read in Jim Douglass' book *Resistance and Contemplation*. Beginning in the summer of 1993, while living in Amarillo, Texas, I worked closely with Jim and Shelley Douglass for five years as a part of the White Train Campaign, seeking to nonviolently block the shipment of nuclear weapons across the United States.

The years of action, reading, Bible study, prayer, music making, piano playing, singing and reveling in the beauty of God's creation, coupled with an array of life experiences, have also contributed to my sense of being a "contemplative activist."

How would you describe "contemplative activism"?

I hope the action part, the doing part, flows from who I am. Worshipping with Quakers in silent meetings, going on retreats and fasting have been part of my life. Often I have pondered the significance of the text (Isaiah 43:1-2) my pastor gave me when I was baptized at age 18. This seems to sum up what we are talking about:

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you."

How do you see Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) embodying the integration of "being" and "doing"?

There were three main points in the original mandate that came out of the meeting that launched CPT.

1. We believe that the mandate to proclaim the gospel of repentance, salvation and reconciliation includes a strengthened biblical peace witness.
2. We believe that faithfulness to what Jesus taught and modeled calls us to more active peacemaking.
3. We believe that a renewed commitment to the gospel of peace calls us to new forms of public witness that may include nonviolent direct action.

Not only did Jesus teach us the importance of prayer and worship, he repeatedly manifested his intimate oneness with God in his actions and life. Even in the initial training, the curriculum included corporate worship and contemplative silence. To my knowledge, all the training sessions have continued to include daily worship.

Early on, Gene Stoltzfus, the first director of CPT, taught us a prayer song with body motions: "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on us. Grant us peace."

We sang it often and in many places; in trainings in North America and even in Iraq during our first overseas delegation in 1990. Worship and our Christocentric faith have sustained us in the ups and downs of "Being in the Way" (the CPT motto) nonviolently and often in stressful situations.

As a Canadian Mennonite, were there certain perspectives you brought to the U.S. context?

I was a learner, often inspired and challenged by wonderful U.S. friends and coworkers, including Mennonites, Quakers and Catholics.

I recognized I was in the most powerful nation on earth, and the most militarized. The urgency of responding as a disciple of Jesus to the violence perpetrated by the military-industrial complex was heightened in the United States.

Not only did Jesus teach us the importance of prayer and worship, he repeatedly manifested his intimate oneness with God in his actions and life.

Even now, while appreciating my own country, Canada, I also aspire to live respectfully as a global person, especially as climate change is upon us.

What about your experience being a woman doing this work?

Early on in my life I was given opportunities. That included MCC assignments in my 20s. In three Mennonite churches, I worked cooperatively with pastors as a Christian education director. In the wider denomination there were leadership postings with Women in Church Vocations and on the General Board of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

At times I noticed that my comments were initially ignored and only taken seriously when restated by a man. This was disappointing and disempowering. Nevertheless, I have learned to trust my intuition and articulate that awareness more and more.

As a younger woman I am encouraged to hear your story, and it reminds me how important intergenerational relationships are.

Over a year ago, a woman in her early 20s walked into my life. I opened my door on a cold Saturday morning in January, and there she was, walking her cousin's dog. After brief introductions, I invited Deanna in for tea, and we chatted. How surprised I was to learn that a friend of hers had recently been on a CPT delegation to Iraq! That is rare in our area, especially if you're from a Dutch Reformed Church background. How surprised Deanna was to discover that our friendship would turn out to be the answer to the prayer she had just been praying as she walked the dog!

> The cloud of witnesses surrounding us draws us to overcome barriers such as ageism and racism and find a place where we can sit together, rejoice and learn from one another.

The friendship deepened as we spent more time together. In the fall of 2010, Deanna continued her adventuresome career and education by following God's call to Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Then about a year after our first encounter, she returned for a week of vacation, bringing three friends from CMU with her. They came to my house for a visit. We drank tea and ate desserts. We made music, laughed, cried and prayed together. It was a beautiful evening celebrating our common faith and encouraging one another on the journey.

The cloud of witnesses surrounding us draws us to overcome barriers such as ageism and racism and find a place where we can sit together, rejoice and learn from one another.

These vibrant young women represent the best in your generation, Joanna, as they aspire to walk in the Way of Jesus. As one who grew up in an earlier time, I lament the mess we've made of God's creation. May my peers and I support you with our prayers and love. You inspire hope that as "my life flows on in endless song, above earth's lamentation, I catch the sweet, though far off hymn that hails a new creation" (R. Lowry).

Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship, edited by Joanna Shenk (Herald Press, 2012, $14.99), collects stories and reflections by an array of people who have been influenced by and helped influence an Anabaptist-Mennonite vision of church and mission. Shenk divides the 19 chapters into three historical "waves": 1950s and 60s, 1970s and 80s, and 1990s to present. The book offers a fascinating overview of Mennonite discipleship in community over the decades, focusing on those individuals and communities who emphasized peace and justice work. A different book would no doubt include a different set of people and communities. The diversity of voices combine into a mosaic of Mennonite beliefs that is remarkable for its cohesion. This book will inform and challenge readers toward faithful discipleship.—*Gordon Houser*

I don't have daughters and sons of my own. Nevertheless, I feel graced to have divine encounters of a different sort and receive blessings a hundredfold (Matthew 19:29).

What a beautiful understanding of family! As a daughter, when you reflect on your relationship with your parents, what was it like caring for them in their later years and continuing your work as a peacemaker in various capacities?

Herman and Anna Berg Sawadsky are now in their heavenly home. Their voices are quiet; their spirits echo still.

After living in the United States more than 20 years, though not consecutively, I returned to Ontario to be closer to my aging parents, who were nearing 90. This move, too, felt like a call from God. Work with CPT continued, overlapping with peace and justice ministries with MCC Ontario. Extensive traveling meant I was often away for weeks at a time.

Whenever I returned to Vineland, I found lovely notes and cards, signed by my parents, that said, "We love you, we missed you, we're so glad you're back." An especially precious memory lingers. My dad, at age 100, had become legally blind. On a sheet of paper he had written in big capital letters, "LIEBE HEDY! HERZLICH WILLKOMEN ALS FRIEDENS STIFTER! LOVE: MAMA & PAPA" (Welcome home, peacemaker! Mom and Dad).

Over the years my parents had graciously supported but not always understood the pathway of their oldest daughter. This unexpected affirmation from my parents moved my heart beyond all expectations. The "go home and work for peace" of half a lifetime ago had somehow come full circle.

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors"(Luke 2:14).

From Widening the Circle, *edited by Joanna Shenk. Copyright © 2012, Herald Press, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Used by permission. Joanna Shenk is associate for interchurch relations and communication for Mennonite Church USA and lives in Elkhart, Ind., where she is part of a cohousing community, the Prairie Wolf Collective.*

Mennonites and the Holocaust

From collaboration to perpetration

by Gerhard Rempel

Anordnung
Für alle Juden in Libau

As the final tragic event in the concluding phase of the Mennonite sojourn in Russia, the Holocaust has not been fully examined as part of Mennonite history either in Russia or in Europe as a whole. The roots of that story begin with the painful events of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent civil war. Driven by fear and violent anarchists, many Mennonites in South Russia set aside their pacifist tradition and formed self-defense units to protect their homes and families against bandits and even the Red Army. Since many had earlier joined the counterrevolutionary forces of former tsarist generals, Mennonites now found themselves on the losing side of the conflict as enemies of the new communist government. In 1928, in an effort to contain threats to his policies, Stalin introduced a fierce collectivization and industrialization campaign enforced by deportation, which tore apart Mennonite colonies and broke up nearly every family by sending fathers and sons into prisons in the far north gulag.

The 1930s were a time of famine and terror. Policies of oppression, especially against religious groups, brought Mennonite settlements to a point of annihilation and destruction, at least for those who could not emigrate in 1929. The Great Terror, as the period was known, affected every Mennonite household and brought their identity as a distinct religious and ethnic group into question.

By the mid-1930s, the public expression of religion and the physical existence of the Mennonite church in Russia had been nearly erased. Young people in particular were vulnerable not only to the spreading atheism but to a moral and lawless indifference to the inner voice of conscience and restraint. A decade later, this trend blinded many to the inherent evil of the carriers of National Socialism who came to Communist Russia in German uniforms as purported liberators.

By the mid-1930s, the public expression of religion and the physical existence of the Mennonite church in Russia had been nearly erased.

Mennonites and the Stutthof concentration camp

The Stutthof concentration camp, located near Danzig, was established in 1939 by the Waffen-SS, an armed unit of the Nazi Party under the direct control of Heinrich Himmler. Since Danzig was an early stronghold in the Nazi revolution, some 6,000 members of the SS were stationed there as early as 1933. ▶

Eventually, the Stutthof complex included over 200 outlying camps and external commando units. Among its victims were prisoners from 25 different countries. Many of the prisoners were Jewish. During their incarceration amid appalling sanitary conditions, prisoners suffered malnutrition, disease, and mental and physical torture. Victims died as a result of the living conditions and the slave-like work; they were also executed by shooting, hanging, gassing, lethal injection, beatings and torture. In June 1944, nearly a year before its liberation on May 9, 1945, by troops of the Soviet Army, Stutthof was converted from a slave labor camp to an extermination center with outdoor furnaces constructed to dispose of corpses.

At the time of the war, Danzig and its environs was home to more Mennonites than any other place in the world. Some 56 Mennonite families lived in the small village of Stutthof itself, and Mennonite names show up in the records as closely associated with the prison camp.

In addition to the direct involvement of Mennonites as guards, Mennonite farmers and businessmen exploited the available inexpensive labor provided by Stutthof prisoners.

Mennonites also served as guards outside the central camp. The worst characters were from Germany, among them two Mennonites. One was SS-Unterscharführer Kurt Janzen, who served as Blockführer and leader of the labor detachment. The other, Heinz Löwen, was one of the few guards actually tried after the war in Danzig and given a relatively light sentence of five years.

Another likely Mennonite, a man named Schröder, was one of 20 SS guards notorious for their brutal treatment of 1,000 Jewish women assigned, among other tasks, to build dykes and bring in the beet harvest. Most of the women were shot outright when they could no longer work. Schröder, the SS guard, was tried after the war for murder, along with a number of his colleagues, but the case was dismissed because the accused could not be interviewed.

At least one woman, possibly a Mennonite, also participated in this ghastly business. Emilie Harms served as a work supervisor of young Jewish inmates from the Groß-Rosen concentration camp. While some of the women below her behaved brutally, there is no evidence of any complaints against Harms herself.

In addition to the direct involvement of Mennonites as guards, Mennonite farmers and businessmen exploited the available inexpensive labor provided by Stutthof prisoners, without any apparent moral compunction. Since Stutthof was largely a slave labor camp for much of its history, the Mennonite connection became important in terms of economic interests.

A Mennonite builder, Gerhard Epp, not only leased 300 Jewish slave laborers at Stutthof to build a new factory near the camp but also served as a general contractor to the SS in assuming responsibility for the construction of all buildings on the premises. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that a Mennonite built the barracks for the first concentration camp on non-German soil. Even more Mennonites were implicated in the forced labor operations of Stutthof in the approximately 200 outlying camps and special purpose work commands related to the Stutthof concentration camp system.

SS-Scharführer Fritz Friese, the Mennonite owner of the largest estate in the Grenzdorf B area, was a member of the General SS and an even more vicious offender. Friese personally selected the fieldworkers from his camp inmates and worked them so ferociously that he was known as the "Lord of Death and Life."

Unfortunately, Fritz Friese had imitators elsewhere. A Mennonite farmer named Otto Froese received a contingent of inmate workers from the camp at Störbuderkampe, but the guard who came with them was unsatisfactory to Froese, who had him replaced with a tougher character.

A story recounted by Werner Klaassen from the Mennonite village of Tiege illustrates the more typical attitude of Mennonite farmers. In 1943 or 1944, a freight car from Stutthof took 120 female prison inmates to Tiege and scattered them among various farms to help bring in the oil seed rape harvest by the use of the old-fashioned sickle. Each group of workers had a concentration camp Kapo as guard and disciplinarian. In this case the Kapo was a German Jew who promptly informed the farmers that there was to be no socializing or common meals with the inmate workers. When Klaassen's father gave the workers breakfast before they were sent out to the fields, a huge argument ensued. The Kapo threatened to send Klaassen himself to the camp or at least receive no more workers if he insisted on his friendly treatment of the workers. When the Kapo

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beat a woman who had taken a brief rest in the shade of a tree, Klaassen complained and was told this was none of his business. Although some Mennonites are likely to tell the story to emphasize Klaassen's kindness, this confirms that this was slave labor pure and simple.

The "massacre at Zaporozhia"

In the years following the war, some Mennonite World War II veterans were accused of war crimes and prosecuted by the U.S. Justice Department and its Canadian counterpart. Several Mennonite memoir writers and non-Mennonite historians have provided further evidence that individuals of Mennonite background were part of Himmler's machinery of death, including the notorious Einsatzgruppen, operating as killing squads behind the German lines in Ukraine and other parts of occupied Russia.

In early April 1944, John Kroeker, errant son of a beloved Mennonite writer and theologian, was meeting two German soldiers—Heinrich Janzen of the SS and Peter Dietrich Wiebe, who had just arrived from Litzmannstadt—shortly before he embarked on a trip to the Warthegau. Janzen had served "under the death head"—a euphemism for the Waffen-SS—and had a remarkable tale to tell about his recent experiences. Starting east of the Mennonite settlement of Zaporozhia in the Ukraine and moving all the way to the Warthegau in Poland, Janzen and his fellow SS soldiers traveled for three months. Their job was to "clean out" the Ukrainian localities near the front and remove the Russian partisans. The SS men visited homes at 5 a.m. and ordered everyone out of the locality by 8. The military unit then forcefully removed all those who were still there at that time, especially since many seem to have frozen in place "when they saw the sign of the death head on the uniforms." The troops had standing orders to shoot ("give them the bullet") anyone who showed the least bit of resistance.

Nearly all the Mennonite individuals I encountered in my research also mentioned treatment of Jews in their experience. Some tried to explain the nature of atrocities they observed or heard about from those that did. The most honest and conscience-stricken was probably the Mennonite teacher Anna Sudermann, who had attended a secondary school of commerce largely populated by young Jewish women. Sudermann described the upheaval and her regret:

"One day we saw how Jews, about 50 men, women and children, were marched down the street. They were all shot outside the village, including half-Jews. A Russian mother with her half-Jewish child is supposed to have gone along with the child to her death. The rural constabulary was ordered to carry out these actions.

... under the Soviet regime we lived through a great deal of inhumanity and also were aware of the prominence of Jews in the economic and political life of the country. At the top of the GPU we noticed many Jews and the interrogating judges were also Jews. Millions of people disappeared and died in the 'silent camps.' We knew what life was like in a totalitarian state. Our concepts of law and justice had been confused. In Germany we saw the opposite of Soviet Russia, that is to say something better. At that time we still revered Hitler. If he had decided upon such a solution of the Jewish question, then the Jews apparently were endangering the political security of Germany. In this manner I tried to justify the inhuman treatment of Jews. In this lies my great guilt, which cannot be expiated by any means. I can only hope for forgiving mercy. It is not particularly easy to confess this guilt. I see this admission in my memoir as a kind of public confessional, at least on paper."

In 1984, the year before his death, Alexander Rempel, son of a prominent Mennonite bishop who disappeared in Stalin's Gulag and a relative of Sudermann, wrote a jumbled letter, couched in the form of a research article, addressed to the archivists at the Winnipeg Mennonite Heritage Center. In it, Rempel revealed what he called the "Massacre of Zaporozhia" with Mennonite participants as perpetrators, and he charged Mennonite leaders with a conspiracy of silence.

The massacre occurred in the region of Chortitza, the Mennonite capital of the Old Colony on the Dnieper River. Historian Michael Gesin in "Holocaust: The Reality of Genocide in Southern Ukraine" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2003) has provided a succinct overview of the events:

"When in October 1941, the Germans occupied the city of Zaporozhe itself, they immediately ordered the Jews to form their own government of 10 German-speaking people to whom they would transfer all future orders. The next day, the regis- ▶

One day we saw how Jews, about 50 men, women and children, were marched down the street. They were all shot outside the village, including half-Jews.—Anna Sudermann tration of all Jews in the city began. All Jews were ordered to wear on their left arm a Star of David sewn with yellow thread onto a white band. At the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, 150 Jews were ordered to gather in the center of town to be transported to their new workplace. On Jan. 3, 1942, they were all killed. After this event, the procedure became more orderly, with the killing of thousands within a month. On March 29, 1942, all the remaining Jews were ordered to stay home and await further instructions. They were told to take clothing and food to last for three weeks for their resettlement in Melitopol, and at 10 a.m., the process of herding Jews into the police headquarters began. On April 1, they were all transferred to the outskirts of the city and shot. Over time, all the remaining Jews were killed, whenever and wherever they were found. The killings continued until the autumn of 1943. In all, more than 44,000 Jews were murdered in the Zaporozhe oblast."

Heinrich Jakob Wiebe, a bookkeeper and veteran administrator from Bolshevik times, was firmly in control, having staffed his administration with fellow Mennonites and reliable Ukrainian and Russian allies.

In the current spate of Holocaust research in the area of the Black Sea, new evidence has emerged that confirms Rempel's accusations that Mennonites participated in significant ways in the massacre at Zaporozhia and in other Holocaust atrocities in the region.

Shortly after Oct. 4, 1941, both Old Zaporozhia and Novo Zaporazhia, including Chortitza, were firmly in the hands of Mennonite administrators, appointed by the Wehrmacht. In Old Zaporozhia, Heinrich Jakob Wiebe, a bookkeeper and veteran administrator from Bolshevik times, was firmly in control, having staffed his administration with fellow Mennonites and reliable Ukrainian and Russian allies. Isaac Johann Reimer was put in charge of Novo Zaporozhia. Both were subordinate to a city commandant supplied by the Wehrmacht, since this front line area was still under army jurisdiction and not German civilian control.

Both Wiebe and Reimer responded directly to the "Jewish question" by compelling all remaining Jews to wear the infamous armband with the Star of David. When asked by the Wehrmacht security division inspector about the Jewish situation, the Mennonite mayors and their subordinates were utterly circumspect, virtually admitting that since most Jews had been killed recently there was no problem with the remnants—100 in Novo Zaporozhia held in a ghetto and 4,000 Keraims in the old city. The Keraims, a Jewish sect, were exempt from the massacre by official order from SS headquarters in Berlin. Since the mayors spoke to inspectors only two weeks after the first massacre, it can be assumed that both were fully aware of the ongoing Holocaust and knew Mennonites as auxiliary policemen were involved in the killings.

Victor Klets, a graduate student at the University of Dnepropetrovsk, has identified three Mennonite men who were members of the local gendarmerie, frequently used as executioners in the Holocaust: Ivan Frantsevich Jantsen of Dnepropetrovsk; Peter Jakovlevich Penner of Novo-Vitebsk, who served as a policeman in Friesendorf, then in the gendarmerie in Pyatikhatkakh; and Peter Frantsevich Dick, a member of the German gendarmerie of Orlovo in the Nikolayev region who, according to a witness, "beat up Soviet citizens and transported them to the shooting site." Klets also found a native of Chortitza named Wiens who served as chief of the Dnepropetrovsk Schutzpolizei school that supplied guards for the concentration camp of the city. The names of these men were extracted from the so-called "infiltration files" not readily available to Western scholars and may only indicate the tip of the iceberg in terms of Mennonite involvement with the Holocaust.

Jack Reimer and the art of survival by metamorphosis

On Aug. 12, 1998, the U.S. Justice Department brought an early war crimes case against Jack Reimer, a Russian Mennonite born in the Molotschna town of Halbstadt, then living in Carmel, N.Y. The charges focused on Reimer's dishonesty about his wartime activities in order to get past immigration officials. According to the charges, Reimer "was captured by the Germans in the summer of 1941 and kept in a prisoner-of-war camp where at least a truckload of soldiers a day died from the cold or starvation. Being of German descent, he was transferred to the SS Training Camp at Trawniki, Poland, where he allegedly helped train men whose job it was to assist the SS in killing European Jews."

Reimer was accused of having taken part in the mass murder of a group of Jewish prisoners in the woods near the camp while at Trawniki in the winter of 1941-1942.

The Reimer case illustrates an important aspect of these Mennonite perpetrators and participants in the Holocaust—the tension between the demands of survival and the tug of a moral conscience below the surface embedded in the Mennonite heritage and religious upbringing. Eric C. Steinhart probes Reimer's motivations and suggests he was compelled by circumstances to metamorphose in order to fit into every new environment. By becoming nearly invisible, he survived, thanks to his chameleonic malleability. Mennonites and others cultivated this talent as members of a "mobilized ethnic diaspora."

According to Steinhart, Reimer thrived in his new role: "Between the spring of 1942 and early 1943, Reimer took part in the deportation of Jews ... to death camp(s) ... [and] helped in the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. ... [He] was implicated in the mass shooting of Jews. ... Reimer and several other Volksdeutsche NCOs led a group of 20 to 30 Wachmänner on an operation to murder Jews... [in a] wooded location some 15 kilometers from the edge of Lublin. [He] escorted small groups of Jews to a shooting pit, [where] ... SS officers and Volksdeutsche NCOs, including Reimer, clubbed their 200 to 300 victims into a mass grave and gunned them down at close range with submachine guns."

In 2005, the U.S Court of Appeals determined that Reimer had misrepresented his background in war crime episodes, and he was officially deported. Before he could be extradited, however, Reimer died at the age of 86.

Heinrich Wiens and the massacre at the glass factory

Recent study has revealed another, even more shocking, account of war crimes committed by the son of a prosperous Russian Mennonite farmer and merchant. Heinrich Wiens was born on March 22, 1906, in the village of Muntau in the South Russian Mennonite settlement of Molochna. Between 1926 and 1930, he appears to have been trained and employed as a dairy inspector in various localities in the Ukraine, leaving for Danzig in 1930 with the goal of starting his own "association of dairy inspectors."

Within a year, Wiens joined the Nazi Party in Danzig and received a low membership number (633,222), dated Jan. 10, 1931, the year after the first electoral success of the National Socialists in the Reichstag and various provinces. On Jan. 12, 1931, he also joined the SS (membership number 22,914) followed by a fairly rapid rise in rank from staff sergeant in 1933 to captain in April 1939. At some point after 1931, he left the Mennonite church, or at least he told the SS ideological watchdogs that he had canceled his membership.

As soon as the war began, he served in SD units in the occupied eastern territories. In November 1941, about the same time Mennonites were being recruited as auxiliary policemen, "SS captain Heinrich Wiens of Muntau in the Molochna" was leading a section of Einsatzkommando 10a for Einsatzgruppe D in Simferopol.

At some point in the summer of 1942, Wiens was transferred to EK 12, another subunit of Einsatzgruppe D, and given more leeway in organizing his own killing operations. Soon after their arrival at the end of August 1942, EK 12 dealt with the Jewish population of Pjatigorsk and neighboring towns in the "established manner," according to their "resettlement" procedures. For his tasks Wiens had the advantage of using "gas vans," newly arrived from the manufacturer of "murder implements" in Berlin.

Following the massacre of the Jews of Kislovodsk, Wiens' EK 12 team members moved on to "deal with" the Jewish population of the town of Jessentuki and other resorts.

After several weeks of forced labor, the Jewish population was ordered to assemble early in the morning of Sept. 7, 1942, at the railroad freight depot for immediate "resettlement to sparsely populated areas of Ukraine."

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The train stopped at a large tank trap, which Wiens had personally selected as the appropriate place for the massacre. The method of execution was the same as it had been for the Jews of Pjatigorsk. Around 50 Jews at a time were forced into the gas van, which then drove around the field until all the passengers had been asphyxiated by the carbon monoxide piped into the van via a grate on the floor of the truck bed. The van then stopped at the edge of the tank trap, and other Jewish prisoners were compelled to pull the bodies out of the van and throw them into the ditch.

Following the massacre of the Jews of Kislovodsk, Wiens' EK 12 team members moved on to "deal with" the Jewish population of the town of Jessentuki and other resorts. Already on Aug. 11, 1942, the Wehrmacht commandant of

▶

Jessentuki, Oberstleutnant von Beck, had anticipated the work of EK 12 by forming a "Jewish committee" in the town and used it to register and rob the Jewish families of any valuable possessions. Shortly thereafter, 1,500 Jews from Jessentuki joined the Jews of Kislovodsk in the mass grave at the glass factory. A similar fate awaited the Jews of Georgijevsk, who were driven to the place of execution by a particularly brutal detachment of Caucasian auxiliaries employed by the leadership of EK 12.

The massive grave at Mineralnyne Vody near the former Mennonite settlements of Templehof, Suvorovka, Olgino and Terek remains forever associated with the name of Heinrich Wiens.

How they ultimately justified their actions of murder against innocent civilians, women and children among them, is a dark mystery that cries out for a deeper explanation.

Conclusion

What might have motivated these genocidal deeds of Mennonites such as Jack Reimer, Heinrich Wiens and other less-well-known cohorts, such as the dozen or more volunteers who, according to Alexander Rempel, joined as SD auxiliaries in the massacre of Zaporozhia? The Lutheran from Katharinendorf appears to have joined the killer group out of sheer idleness and boredom. Others probably found attractive the idea of exercising power—in uniform and with a gun—over their perceived enemies. Mennonites who had survived the Stalinist purges were strongly inclined to admire Hitler, the anti-Stalin, and were often willing to join any Nazi organization as a kind of reflexive, passionate action. Much the same motivation was undoubtedly behind the comparatively large number of Mennonite volunteers for the Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht as well as their participation in various police forces.

Many Mennonite survivors of the Stalinist terror and anti-kulak and deportation campaigns expressed virulent hatred for both Jews and Communists as equivalent evils. Mennonites generally resented, envied and despised Jews because so many of them seem to have been found in the ranks of the Soviet secret police and the Communist party cadre as well as among the supervisors and managers of collective farms and local government agencies. Anna Sudermann, for example, reported that she encountered them all too frequently in the judicial system, in the role of interrogating judges and states attorney and police chiefs.

Hence, it was easy to regard Jews as part of the Soviet class enemy on whom raw revenge could now be exacted under the guise of official "police" work, since few Mennonites were probably keen enough to distinguish between normal policing and outright murder committed under the auspices of the Einsatzkommando. But how they ultimately justified their actions of murder against innocent civilians, women and children among them, is a dark mystery that cries out for a deeper explanation.

If Jack Reimer became a perpetrator in the Holocaust in order to survive, Heinrich Wiens did it to advance his lifetime career in the SS.

What are we to make of the Mennonite mayors of Zaporozhia and Novo Zaporozhia, as well as Chortitza or Osterwick, all of them appointed by the Wehrmacht, who were in power when the massacre at Zaporozhia took place? They stand at the top of hundreds of Mennonites who joined the German Army or worked for a host of German-Nazi agencies. They could not deny they were at least witnesses to or observers of the Holocaust. But how much responsibility or guilt should they have to assume?

In 1942, the mayor of Osterwick, my hometown, reported to German authorities a fellow townsman who happened to be a Jew married to a Mennonite woman. This Jew, who had spent his whole life with Mennonites and even spoke Plautdietsch, was arrested and killed. For a few months my own family lived in the house of this family. It was known as the Judenhaus. Recalling that experience fills me with the same ominous feeling Anna Sudermann expressed when she discovered the free clothing she received from the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle distribution center that came from the Jews killed at Babi Yar in Kiev.

How much guilt and condemnation is shared by those Mennonites who witnessed and observed or benefited from the Holocaust in their midst?

Gerhard Rempel is professor emeritus of history at Western New England University. This is a much-condensed version of his article, which appeared in the October 2010 issue of The Mennonite Quarterly Review *and is used with the permission of the author and* MQR. *The original article also includes extensive footnotes.*

An experience in Haiti of the presence of God

Nearer my God to thee

by J. Denny Weaver

Some years ago, I had an experience of peace and salvation—and thus of God—that is still present to me. Both words, peace and salvation, are important.

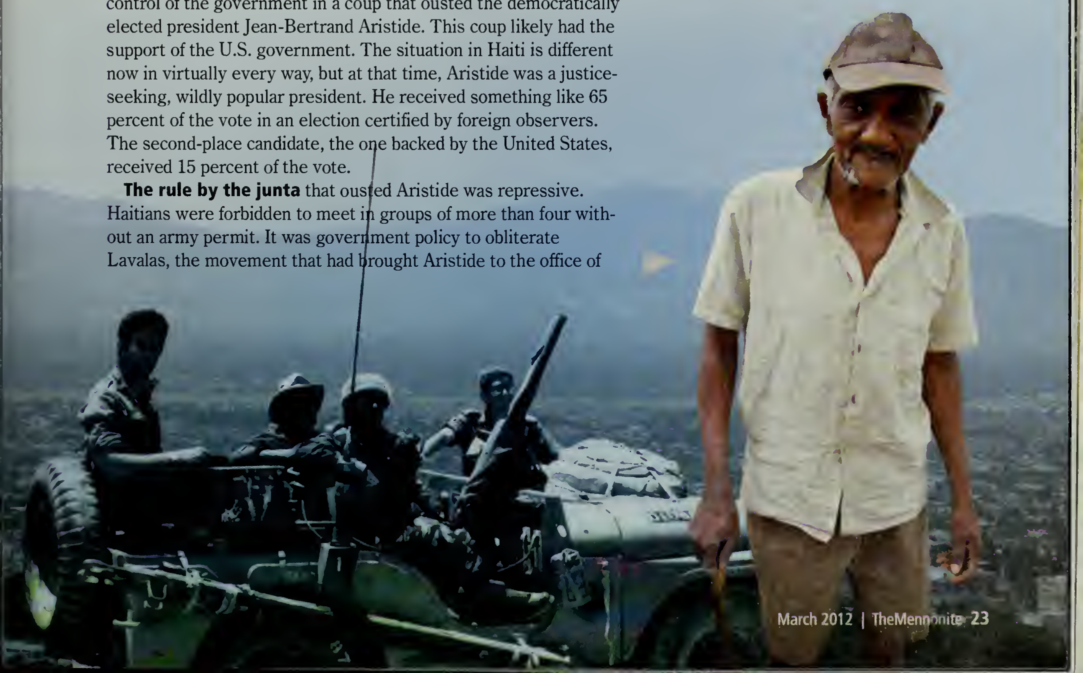
This experience of peace and salvation occurred in December 1992, on the first of my three trips to Haiti with delegations from Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). The experience can still overwhelm me when I think about it.

CPT is a nonviolent, activist, violence-reduction project sponsored by Mennonite, Brethren and Quaker churches. CPT has programs in places such as Hebron on the occupied West Bank, with native peoples in Canada, and in Colombia.

This CPT delegation was in Haiti to confront the violence perpetrated on much of the populace by the military junta that seized control of the government in a coup that ousted the democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. This coup likely had the support of the U.S. government. The situation in Haiti is different now in virtually every way, but at that time, Aristide was a justice-seeking, wildly popular president. He received something like 65 percent of the vote in an election certified by foreign observers. The second-place candidate, the one backed by the United States, received 15 percent of the vote.

The rule by the junta that ousted Aristide was repressive. Haitians were forbidden to meet in groups of more than four without an army permit. It was government policy to obliterate Lavalas, the movement that had brought Aristide to the office of

Of a total population of 6 million, an estimated 250,000 Aristide supporters lived in the underground rather than risk death at the hands of the army.



president. It was illegal to say the name of Lavalas, and people who mentioned Lavalas or Aristide in public were subject to arrest. Or they just disappeared in the night. More than once, our little group of North Americans was cautioned not to mention the names of Aristide and Lavalas when walking in the street, lest we bring suspicion on the Haitians walking with us.

Of a total population of 6 million, an estimated 250,000 Aristide supporters lived in the underground rather than risk death at the hands of the army. Most of those in the underground had come to the attention of the army, either because they had worked publicly for Lavalas or had worked in social programs organized by Lavalas to address such needs as literacy or the fair sale of crops.

An elderly Haitian man said, 'When I hear you praying, I have hope.'

Many had left their homes precipitously, slipping out a back way when friends or family came to warn them of army personnel approaching their houses.

Our delegation spent a little more than a week talking with people in the underground in order to hear their stories and give them a voice. One part of our mission was to gather stories we could tell back in the United States to bring visibility to the problems. We hoped that exposing this violence to the light of day might unleash forces of change.

Another part of our mission was to engage in public action that would speak for the suppressed and oppressed people of Haiti. On the day of the experience I will tell you about, we went to the U.S. embassy with a statement that described the oppression of the population being carried out by the coup government the United States appeared to support. We handed the statement through the iron bars of a locked gate to a low-level functionary who assured us her superiors would give it careful consideration.

Our status as foreigners protected us, and as foreigners we could say things Haitian nationals could not. Part of our job was to speak for them. Thus we invited Haitian TV stations to film us outside the U.S. embassy. Protected by our status as foreigners, in full view of Haitian TV cameras, we read statements from people hiding in the underground. One was an eloquent call for Haitians and foreigners alike to continue to struggle nonviolently for justice in Haiti. I took great satisfaction from participating in this group that gave a public voice to these suppressed Haitian voices. But this was not yet the experience of salvation.

From the embassy, we walked perhaps a half mile to a statue in the heart of Port-au-Prince that served as a symbol of Haitian freedom. From this statue, in full view 100 meters away, were the two buildings that housed the government powers of Haiti—its army headquarters and its capitol. (This capitol is the white, heavily damaged government building that was shown so often in TV news reports after the devastating earthquake in Port-au-Prince.) These buildings housed the oppressive forces whose policies our delegation was in Haiti to protest against. We gathered in an uneven circle around this statue that symbolized freedom. In that circle, our delegation recited a liturgy, sang songs and prayed together.

I was part of our circle as someone prayed aloud. It took a couple moments before I realized that another voice was also speaking right beside me—by my right hand. I turned and saw an elderly Haitian man, who had to repeat his quiet, labored English words a couple times before they sank in. He said only, "When I hear you praying, I have hope. When I hear you praying, I have hope." As this elderly gentleman's words penetrated my consciousness, I sensed the presence of God. I have never felt nearer to God than at that moment.

The elderly gentleman's experience of hope in our circle revealed to me in a new way the significance of our action. I had gone to Haiti to engage in political protest, and the public performance of worship, song and prayer had seemed secondary or even a distraction. It was important to witness against injustice and oppression and give voice to oppressed Haitians—and I would eliminate none of our political protesting. But the elderly gentleman opened my eyes to see that we were also performing these actions as Christians, as God's people—and that was important. We were engaged in a symbolic protest against violence and injustice. But when I heard the elderly gentleman's words, I realized what we did was more than a political protest. For a brief moment in our circle, the reign of God was present. Our group was the shalom community of God's people, making visible and present God's peace and salvation in contrast to the oppressive powers resident in the capitol and army headquarters in full view across the avenues. For a brief moment, our circle was more than a symbol. In the hope expressed by the elderly Haitian man, I saw that the future peaceable reign of God was tangibly present and breaking into our world, and I experienced it. The elderly man had felt that peace, and in his words I experienced it, too.

Those of us gathered in that circle were there because we were Christians committed to nonviolence. Our gathered circle expressed our solidarity with suffering people. But our gathering witnessed to another way as well, to the peaceable kingdom of God. While the vision is not yet realized, standing in that circle, we were acting out for a brief moment the peaceable kingdom of Isaiah 11. Gathered in that circle, we were making a protest against violence and injustice on the doorsteps of those who perpetrated violence and injustice.

This gathering was what the church should be: a lived, visible expression of God's future salvation breaking into the present. In the church, people should experience the reign of God breaking into the present. The actions of this church live in the power of the resurrection of Jesus, whose life made visible the reign of God in which the church lives. This church is a community where peace, justice, and reconciliation are visible and real. This is salvation experienced in the church whose life is a continuation of the story of Jesus.

That is the vision I carry for my congregation, Madison Mennonite Church. We enacted this vision when several of us participated in an antiwar march around Capitol Square (in 2010). Our presence was a political protest in which we participated with other political protesters of various persuasions. And whatever their motivation, we could march with them as long as our varying motivations intersected in the opposition to war at this antiwar moment. But it was also important to have a sign there that said, "Madison Mennonite Church." In my vision we were there as the people of God, giving visibility to God's peace and salvation. For us, along with being a political statement, that march was a symbolic act of witnessing to a word from God about peace and salvation—like Isaiah's dramatic public act of walking naked (Isaiah 20:1-5) and like Jesus' deliberately defiant act of healing the withered hand on the Sabbath when he could have waited until the following day (Luke 6:6-11). Our public actions, whether marching around Capitol Square or having Peace Sunday in the midst of the country's patriotic celebration of war, continue these actions of Isaiah and Jesus.

But such visible, public acts are far from the only way our congregation continues the presence of Jesus and makes present the reign of God in the world. As a congregation, our gatherings for worship are the lived presence of God's peace and salvation breaking into our world, often not as dramatically as at that moment in Haiti, but no less real. Our daily lives as a congregation and as individuals make present the inbreaking of the reign of God into the world—in providing mental health services, healing the sick, working with Habitat for Humanity, working with homeless people, welcoming the new people who come to church because they want to experience a peace church, and much more.

This model of the church that continues the presence of Jesus and makes visible the reign of God in the world does not stop with our congregation. It is my vision for Mennonite Church USA—that every dimension of the church's life and work be construed as an extension of the mission of Jesus in the world. May the peace and reconciliation and justice of the reign of God be visible in the life and work and governance of Mennonite Church USA.

This gathering was what the church should be: a lived, visible expression of God's future salvation breaking into the present.

Some 19 years later, that brief conversation with the elderly Haitian gentleman still inspires my work and my vision for our congregation and for our denomination. I pray they be an expression and a continuation of God's peace and salvation, which we can encounter in every aspect of our fellowship together and which is a vision of the peaceful and saving presence of the church in our city and in the world. When I hear the church praying this prayer, I have hope.

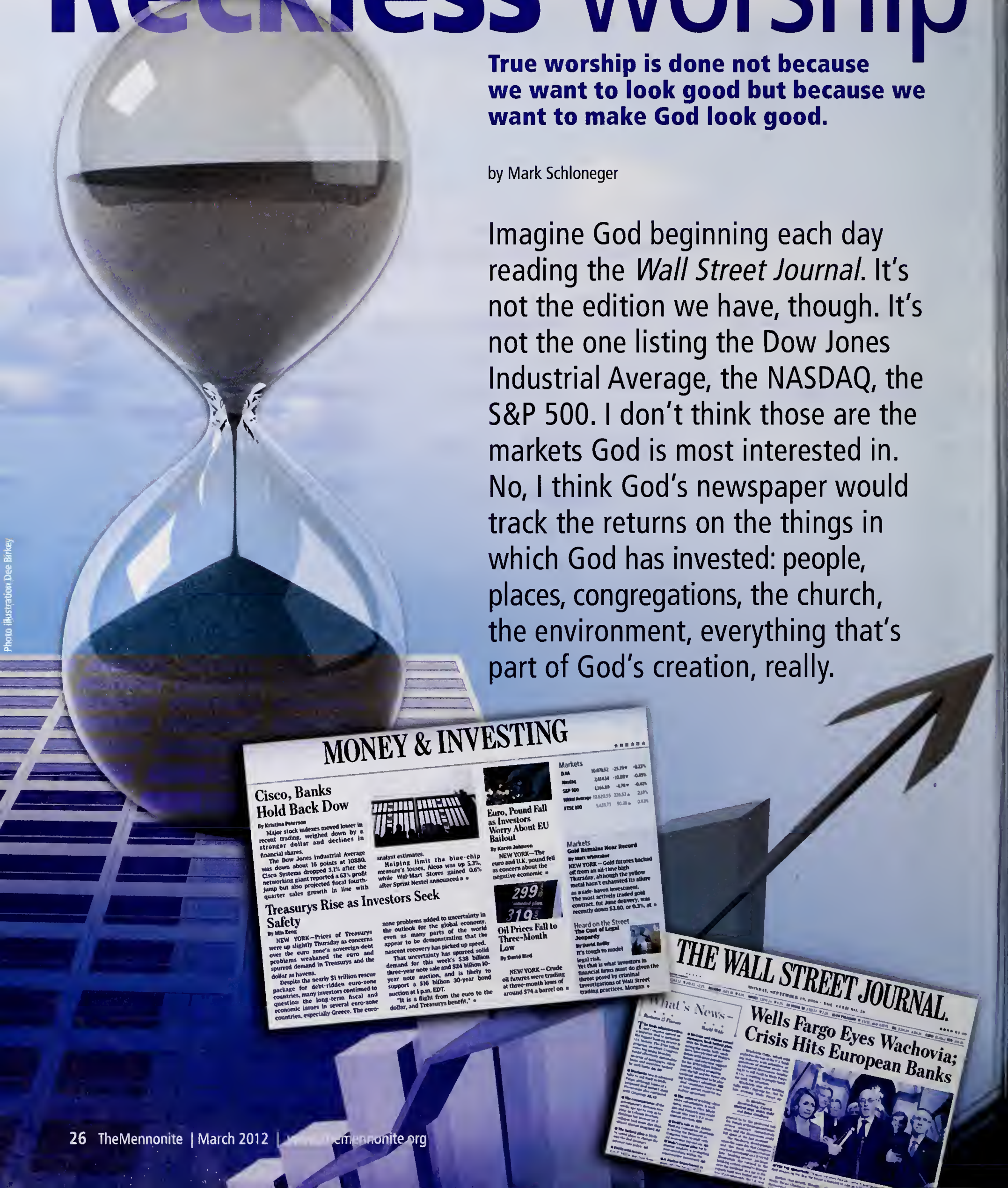
J. Denny Weaver, professor emeritus of religion at Bluffton (Ohio) University, is a member of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church. The first version of this meditation was a sermon at Madison Mennonite Church and is offered as a tribute to Gene Stoltzfus, who died on March 10, 2010. Stoltzfus was leader of the CPT delegation to Haiti in this story, and CPT director at that time.

Reckless worship

True worship is done not because we want to look good but because we want to make God look good.

by Mark Schloneger

Imagine God beginning each day reading the *Wall Street Journal*. It's not the edition we have, though. It's not the one listing the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the NASDAQ, the S&P 500. I don't think those are the markets God is most interested in. No, I think God's newspaper would track the returns on the things in which God has invested: people, places, congregations, the church, the environment, everything that's part of God's creation, really.



MONEY & INVESTING

Cisco, Banks Hold Back Dow

By Kristina Peterson

Major stock indexes moved lower in recent trading, weighed down by a stronger dollar and declines in financial shares.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down about 16 points at 10880. Cisco Systems dropped 3.1% after the networking giant reported a 63% profit jump but also projected fiscal fourth-quarter sales growth in line with analyst estimates.

Helping limit the blue-chip measure's losses, Alcoa was up 5.3%, while Wal-Mart Stores gained 0.6% after Sprint Nextel announced a ▪

Euro, Pound Fall as Investors Worry About EU Bailout

By Karen Johnson

NEW YORK—The euro and U.K. pound fell as concern about the negative economic ▪

Markets

Markets

Gold Remains Near Record

By Matt Whittaker

NEW YORK -- Gold futures backed off from an all-time high Thursday, although the yellow metal hasn't exhausted its allure as a safe-haven investment. The most actively traded gold contract, for June delivery, was recently down $3.60, or 0.3%, at ▪

Treasurys Rise as Investors Seek Safety

By Min Zeng

NEW YORK—Prices of Treasurys were up slightly Thursday as concerns over the euro zone's sovereign-debt problems weakened the euro and spurred demand in Treasurys and the dollar as havens.

Despite the nearly $1 trillion rescue package for debt-ridden euro-zone countries, many investors continued to question the long-term fiscal and economic issues in several euro-zone countries, especially Greece. The euro-zone problems added to uncertainty in the outlook for the global economy, even as many parts of the world appear to be demonstrating that the nascent recovery has picked up speed.

That uncertainty has spurred solid demand for this week's $38 billion three-year note sale and $24 billion 10-year note auction, and is likely to support a $16 billion 30-year bond auction at 1 p.m. EDT.

"It is a flight from the euro to the dollar, and Treasurys benefit." ▪

Oil Prices Fall to Three-Month Low

By David Bird

NEW YORK -- Crude oil futures were trading at three-month lows of around $74 a barrel on ▪

Heard on the Street

The Cost of Legal Jeopardy

By David Reilly

It's tough to model legal risk. Yet that is what investors in financial firms must do given the threat posed by criminal investigations of Wall Street trading practices. Morgan ▪

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

What's News—

Wells Fargo Eyes Wachovia; Crisis Hits European Banks

Photo illustration: Dee Birkey

I imagine God reading the market trends with great joy and with great sadness. It's not that God has doubts about where his whole portfolio is headed; it's just that the quotes on God's individual stocks fluctuate. God's investments don't always produce the returns that he's looking for.

Imagine each of our names being in God's newspaper alongside the names of everyone in the whole world. Our names would be printed in tiny print in four columns, just for convenience sake. Beside each of our names would be an index and an arrow, telling God at a glance about the status of God's investment in us, the status of Christ's life in us.

I wonder, if God picked up a newspaper each morning and scanned the stocks, what would it say beside our names? Where would God's investment be trending in us? Are we bulls or bears? Was it a good day? A bad day? A good year? A bad year? Where are we compared to a year ago, 10 years ago, 20? What would it say beside the names of our congregations? Is God's investment gaining? Falling? Or has it been a stagnant stock for quite some time?

It's good to think about these things because it's easy to treat God's investment as our property. It's easy to go about living our lives as if we had no investor, as if our habits, routines, time, meetings and programs had no purpose, no meaning, no interest beyond themselves.

I often think of the story in John's Gospel where Mary takes that supersized bottle of expensive perfume and pours it out onto Jesus' feet, wiping his feet with her hair (John 12). It's an image that I have a hard time getting out of my mind. Her act seems so reckless, so improper, so irresponsible in so many ways. The amount and type of that perfume cost a year's wages. Think what good things could be done with that money. How many people could it have helped? And this was a woman letting her hair down in public for an intimate expression of love for a man. Did she really give no thought as to what others might think? How about the values of modesty? Respectability? Order? Stewardship? This does not seem like the proper time, place or thing to do. This was reckless worship.

When thinking of such a scene, I can hear myself speaking through the mouth of Judas:

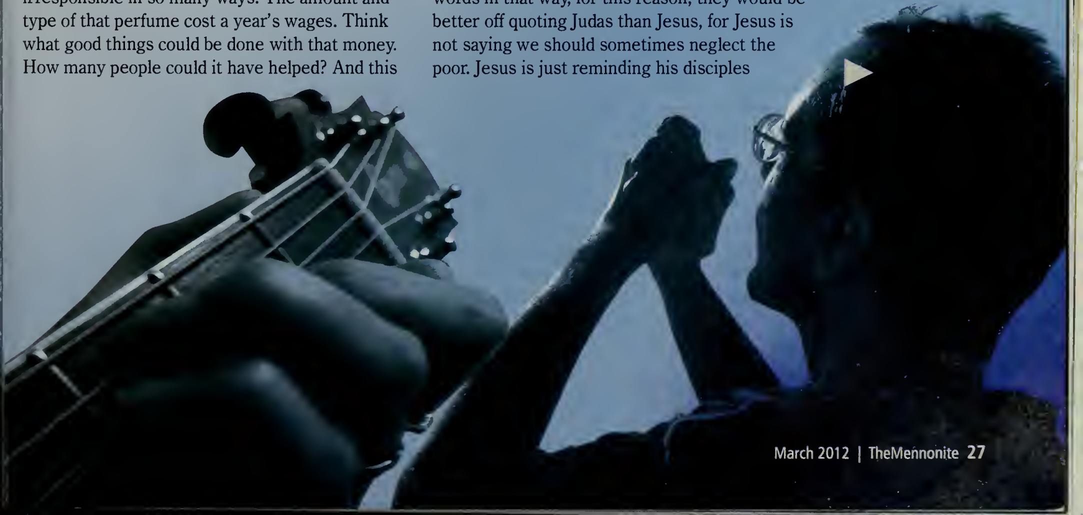
"Why wasn't this perfume sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor?"

Worship is whatever happens whenever we become aware that we are in the presence of the living God.

John tells his readers that Judas wasn't sincere when he spoke these words, for John says Judas had no concern for the poor. He had his eyes on the money. Judas would trade anything to get his hands on some more silver.

But the interesting thing is that Jesus' replied to Judas as if he was sincere. "Leave her alone," he said, "for it was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

I have heard people quote this verse to make the argument that it's OK to splurge from time to time, to enjoy the finer things a little bit and not get too preoccupied with the poor. "After all," their argument goes, "Jesus said the poor will always be among us." But when people quote these words in that way, for this reason, they would be better off quoting Judas than Jesus, for Jesus is not saying we should sometimes neglect the poor. Jesus is just reminding his disciples



about the proper focus for life. It's Judas who takes his eyes off Jesus, and that's wrong no matter the reason, even if it's for one of our "good causes."

Mary had it exactly right. Worship, true worship, is done not because we have to, not because we expect something in return, not because we might save a lost soul, and not because we want to be fed or strengthened or energized or entertained.

True worship is done not because we want to look good but because we want to make God look good. Worship is whatever happens whenever we become aware that we are in the presence of the living God.

What would happen if everyone who attended worship services on Sunday mornings directed more and more of their lives toward this end, offering themselves to God because they have found life in Jesus?

For Mary, that meant pouring an expensive bottle of perfume on the feet of Jesus and letting her hair down to wipe his feet. When it comes to worship, there is not a proper place or a proper time or proper restraint, as if it's sometimes appropriate to act like we are not in the presence of the living God. You see, when it comes to worship, everything is permissible if it is directed toward God and calls the attention of others to God.

But it's so easy to live our lives as if our habits, our routines, time, meetings and programs had no purpose, meaning or interest beyond themselves. It's so easy to live our lives without any concern for our investor.

If God began each day reading the *Golden Street Journal*, I think this is how the index would track his investment in us: How much of our lives is returned toward him in worship? That's because God's investment in us is Christ's own life, and Christ gave his life to free us for life—life lived in the presence of God and reconciled to God, to each other and to all of creation.

Worship is what we are made for, and our acts of worship call others to the one we worship. When Mary anointed Jesus' feet with the perfume, its fragrance filled the whole house. As we follow Christ, "through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved" (2 Corinthians 2:14-15).

When we say, "What a waste" when it comes to worship, we act in collusion with Judas.

For the value of our worship is not predicated on what we receive but on what God receives. Worship is a "royal waste of time," author Marva Dawn writes provocatively, at least according to our consumer-focused culture. That's because the way to judge worship, true worship, is not what you receive or the poor receive or the lost receive or the hurting receive but on what God receives.

Through Christ Jesus, the eternal God is the focus of our worship, and it is with this focus that we work among the poor, the hurting, the lost and the lonely. Sometimes we can be so focused on being right, relevant or successful that we are no longer faithful.

Mary anointed Jesus' feet because she had recognized God's investment in his people, and she was returning that investment to God. What a waste! Judas thought when he saw the empty bottle of perfume. They said that about Jesus, too, when he gave his body over to his enemies.

I wonder, if God picked up the newspaper and flipped to the back pages, what would it say beside your name? How do the things you watch, listen to, wear, say or do help you become aware that you are in the presence of the living God? How do these choices bring others to the awareness that they, too, are in the presence of the living God? Everything counts—every time, every place. They either help you live out the purpose for which you were created or not. They either help others get a whiff of the aroma of Christ or not.

Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and to bear fruit, fruit that will last" (John 15:16a). What would happen if everyone who attended worship services on Sunday mornings directed more and more of their lives toward this end, offering themselves to God because they have found life in Jesus? What would happen if their worship never stopped?

"What a waste!" some people would say.

I think God would say, "What a good, good day for my investment! What a good, good day toward kingdom come, my will done, on earth as it is in heaven!"

And I think the aroma of Christ would fill the whole world.

Mark Schloneger is pastor of Springdale Mennonite Church in Waynesboro, Va.

God wants to reveal his work in all of us.

The unlikely outcomes

by Roy A. Borges

In 1989, a robbery charge landed me back in prison, where I asked Christ into my life. But before he could use me he had to change me, on the inside. An unlikely outcome, I thought, until I discovered that God specializes in unlikely outcomes.

The Israelites experienced an unlikely outcome at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21). Samson also experienced an unlikely outcome at the end of his life. God answered his repentant prayer and "those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed during his life" (Judges 16:30).

What God did in the past, however, is not the measure of what he will do now. God's power and creativity is not limited to what he has experienced. The irony is that at the moment I need him the most my faith wavers. Why? It's because my imagination is limited to my experiences. But that's the whole point. God wants to make himself known to me through my experiences. My faith should not be based on what he has done for others but on who he is—the sovereign God of the Universe, the God of the unlikely outcomes.

With 20-some years having passed since my arrest and incarceration, I can testify that I never anticipated the unique ways I would experience God. Every day brings struggles, tests and heartaches into my life. But every day I experience God and every day become more aware of how much he loves me.

When I was sentenced to prison in 1989, the future looked uncertain. I didn't know if I was ever going to see any of my friends or family again. I didn't even know if I was going to ever get out. Life seemed hopeless. But when I began to trust in God, my faith gave me hope, and I experienced the unlikely outcomes, unique and unexpected things. My priorities changed.

Trusting God gave my life direction, purpose and meaning. Every day became a blessing. Yes, even in prison. Not only did God change me, my desires changed. Now what God wanted was more important than what I wanted.

That doesn't mean I don't experience troubles, pains or failures. Life is still a battle. But nothing can keep God from accomplishing his purposes for my life (Romans 8:28).

An unlikely outcome does not always mean all the experiences will be good. God's unforeseeable ways don't always coincide with what we think is in our best interest. For example: We find life by dying (John 12:22). We are exalted when we humble ourselves (Matthew 23:12). We become great by becoming small (Matthew 23:11). It is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of an unlikely outcome is found in "a man who was blind from birth" (John 9:2-3). Jesus' disciples asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" (vs. 2).

"Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him' " (vs. 3).

When we look back at the experiences in our lives, like the Israelites, Samson and the blind man Jesus healed, we see that God has an unlikely outcome planned for all his children.

Trusting God gave my life direction, purpose and meaning.

God wants to reveal his work through all of us. For most of us, it is something we never expected. Like the blind man who never thought life had a purpose for him. He lived in darkness for years unaware of God's plan for his life.

The sovereign God of the universe still specializes in the unlikely outcomes. I never imagined I would come to prison and write Christian articles and stories that would touch people's hearts. But it is not what God has done through me, as great as that is, that is so unique and unexpected, but what he has done inside me. God's grace changed me. I was blind, but now I see. For, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Roy A. Borges is a prisoner in Orlando, Fla.

Mediating hope

Colleen McFarland is archivist for the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee.

Last July, I experienced an a-ha moment while attending the Archives Leadership Institute at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, an event that brings together 25 midcareer archivists from a wide variety of settings. It was suddenly apparent to me why my work in the Mennonite Church USA Archives was different from my previous eight years' work in college and university archives and libraries.

Even better, I could finally identify the gut feeling that led me to apply for and accept this archivist position almost two years ago. In my work for the denomination, I am not just an archivist. I am a mediator of hope.

Of all of the amazing experiences of that week, during which my peers and I thought about our development as leaders in the institutions that employ us and in our profession at large, the one that stood out to me most was our introduction to resonant leadership, a leadership style characterized by mindfulness, compassion and hope.

As presented by Richard Boyatzis of Case Western Reserve University and Annie McKee of the University of Pennsylvania, resonant leadership is an alternative to leadership models that emphasize analytical skills, self-assertion and political prowess. While not denying the importance of such skills, resonant leadership insists they are best exercised in the service of wholeness and connectedness. It challenges leaders to embrace hope and the confidence, sense of purpose and resilience that accompany it.

> I also love bringing new life to the dead, bearing witness to their lives and reviving their hope.

As the child of a university professor and the recipient of two graduate degrees, I am well versed in the intellectual cynicism that permeates institutions of higher learning. Expressing hopefulness to one's college or university colleagues is akin to announcing that you have bedbugs. It does not earn you friends or respect. Those operating from a place of hope are usually either dismissed as naïve Pollyannas or suspected of colluding with the administration. In this environment, one chooses not between optimism and pessimism but between optimism and "reality."

Working as an archivist for a religious organization is entirely different. Hope has a credibility and depth in religious communities that is unmatched in secular society. In Christian contexts, hope motivates and guides behavior. Hope inspires us to provide outward and visible signs of our belief in God's promised future. Hope steers us from self-destructive actions. And hope prompts us, as individuals and in community, to further Christ's coming kingdom of love, peace and justice.

In my daily work in the Mennonite Church USA Archives, I am surrounded by the stories of people who hoped. Their diaries, letters, meeting minutes and reports bear witness to the hope that motivated them to find alternatives to violence, poverty, misery and injustice. It is an honor to care for these stories. But more importantly, it is imperative to share these stories of hope with the public by making collections available in our reading room and posting documents online.

I love helping present-day researchers welcome strangers from the past into their minds and hearts, creating relationships across time. I love it when researchers laugh with, cry for or express outrage on behalf of the stranger they are studying. I love helping cultivate in novice researchers empathy, compassion and an appreciation for the concerted effort required to understand those who are different. I know something amazing has occurred when a student researcher simply cannot stop reading old letters or diaries—despite the difficult handwriting and funny spellings—because he or she has to know how things turn out in the end. I also love bringing new life to the dead, bearing witness to their lives and reviving their hope. And despite the myriad differences among and within Mennonite communities of the past and present, we remain united in our hope.

The hope that permeates the historical records in the Mennonite Church USA Archives informs my hope for the future of the archives. Like all archives today, we face formidable challenges—a shrinking budget, an ever-expanding collection, the brave new world of electronic records management and the insatiable demand for digital access to historical documents, to name a few. And yet, in the spirit of the collections I curate, I remain hopeful. How could I do otherwise? TM

Each year, the Mennonite Church USA Archives, located in Goshen, Ind., and Newton, Kan., hosts several hundred researchers in person and answers about 1,000 reference questions for in-person and remote researchers. In the past year, the approximately 1,700 photographs available online have received more than 50,000 views.—*cm*

On biblical inerrancy

The Bible need not be inerrant to be a fully trustworthy and reliable source for Christian faith, doctrine and living. Some are urging their area conferences to embrace the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, which asserts that the Bible in its original texts is not only God's Word but is without error in every detail. Proponents of biblical inerrancy call it a "watershed" doctrine, meaning that if the church abandons inerrancy, the waters of uncertainty will burst through the floodgates and liberalism will overwhelm the church. This argument is made from fear, not reason.

I have a deep love and high regard for Scripture. The Bible is central to my faith and a constant source of comfort, guidance and inspiration. Yet I do not insist on its inerrancy, mainly because the Bible makes no such claim for itself. The closest it comes is 2 Timothy 2:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (KJV).

We do not worship Father, Son and Holy Scriptures but Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is important to remember that Paul was not referring to the Bible we have today but to the Jewish Scriptures as they existed in the first century. I agree with Paul's assertion, and so does Mennonite Church USA. Article 4 of the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* says: "We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness. We accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and as the fully reliable and trustworthy standard for Christian faith and life."

Stephen Davis, in *The Debate About the Bible*, says that to assert biblical inerrancy is "to claim that the Bible contains no errors at all—none in history, geography, botany, astronomy, sociology, psychiatry, economics, geology, logic, mathematics or any area whatsoever." The passage in 2 Timothy does not assert inerrancy. Such a claim is as unmerited as the Catholic Church's doctrine of papal infallibility.

Aside from grammatical and transcription errors, which do not contradict inerrancy, there are hundreds of inconsistencies in the Bible. Some can be reasonably explained, others are more problematic. I cite these examples not to discredit the veracity of the Holy Scriptures but to expose the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as untrue.

First, what color was the robe placed on Jesus at Golgotha? Was it scarlet, as described by Matthew 27:28, or was it purple, as two other Gospel writers, Mark and John, claim (Mark 15:17 and John 19:2)? Maybe it was a combination of scarlet and purple, which explains the difference. Perhaps Matthew wanted to emphasize Jesus' humanity by indicating the shame being heaped upon him, since red is a color associated with infamy, while Mark and John want to emphasize Christ's divinity, indicative of a royal purple robe. Either way, my faith does not depend on the accuracy of the Gospel writer's recall of this detail.

Second, how did Judas die? Did he hang himself, as Matthew 27: 5 says, or did he fall "headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spill out," as Luke claims in Acts 1:18? A reasonable, straightforward reading of Scripture, which is the traditional Anabaptist approach to biblical interpretation, says they can't both be true. For more substantial examples, see the longer version of this article posted at TheMennonite.com

The Bible can be faithful and true without being miraculously error-free. But not for those who insist on biblical inerrancy. For them, even inconsequential facts must be consistent. If not, an extrabiblical scenario is developed that reconciles all apparent errors. Those who adhere to inerrancy treat the Bible like a supernaturally perfect book that embodies God. But the God who created the universe cannot be confined to the pages of a text. We do not worship Father, Son and Holy Scriptures but Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The debate about biblical inerrancy distracts the church from its primary mission of proclaiming the gospel and being communities of healing and hope. Yes, we need to revere the Bible, but there is far more fruit in reading and obeying it than defending its inerrancy through convoluted mental gymnastics. Our faith does not depend on the Bible being accurate in every detail. Rather, it hangs on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Bible is a "fully reliable and trustworthy" record of firsthand witnesses who accurately testify to Israel's history and Christ's life, sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. TM

Steve Carpenter is chair of the congregation at Immanuel Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Executive Board cuts expenses by $160,000

Pittsburgh 2011 generates $92,901 margin, board discusses convention purposes.

Declining finances for Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board (EB) was a major concern when the board convened through a two-hour conference call on Feb. 13. Included in the discussion was the financial margin generated by the Pittsburgh 2011 convention.

While one of the objectives for the Mennonite Church USA churchwide conventions is to generate small margins, the board wrestled with how such margins should be communicated.

According to the financial statement for Pittsburgh 2011, the margin as of Dec. 31, 2011, was $92,901.27,—a "significant amount," according to Glen Guyton, director of finance and convention planning. In addition to the margin, convention expenses included an additional $33,106 not in the original budget but transferred to the Executive Board as revenue and for staffing.

A draft of the convention purpose statement did not include any mention of fund-raising as a key objective. New board member Larry Hauder of Boise, Idaho, suggested that the convention purpose statement include fund-raising as an objective for conventions.

Hauder said that many nonprofit organizations hold annual events with a purpose to raise revenue to further the organization's mission. Certain convention sites, especially those on the West Coast, cost the EB more due to typically lower attendance.

However, board members also acknowledged that Mennonite Church USA cannot afford to run a deficit while holding conventions. Together, these two dynamics pose a challenge. Board member Merrill Moyer cautioned the board not to frame conventions as for-profit events but as events that contribute to Mennonite Church USA.

Board member David Sutter suggested that the convention purpose statement mention that conventions offer the opportunity to raise resources to further work as a missional church.

Ervin Stutzman, executive director for Mennonite Church USA, expounded on this notion, saying the various types of resources—or "capital"—found at conventions go beyond simply dollars and include intellectual capital, networking and more. EB members appeared to conclude that increasing the capacity for missional church work should be added to the convention purpose statement.

During his report to the EB, Stutzman proposed spending $60,000 in the board's racial/ethnic fund to demonstrate a commitment to undoing racism and advancing intercultural transformation. These funds come from a tithe of the income from the capital campaign for the new Elkhart, Ind., office building. The goal is to reach $300,000 for the racial/ethnic fund. Board members Juanita Nunez and Addie Banks encouraged Stutzman to move forward and use the funds, as "needs are great," said Banks. Iris de León-Hartshorn, director for transformative peacemaking, and Guyton are responsible for the use of this money.

In other financial news, Guyton reported from the board's resource committee. He said the EB had cut expenses by over $160,000 from last year through austerity measures it enacted.

However, Guyton drew attention to the Native Mennonite Ministries' deficit of more than $20,000 during the first five months of the current fiscal year. The NMM financial report shows combined losses of $89,115 since Feb. 1, 2010. Guyton said he is working with NMM to find revenue sources but that the EB ought to consider how to move forward.

The Executive Board also weighed in on several wording changes to the Purposeful Plan, which is now in the final draft stages.

Banks led the meeting with a devotional focusing on the life of Sojourner Truth, in honor of Black History Month. The Scripture passage was Hebrews 12.—*Anna Groff*

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A significant drop in funding

Agencies have 36.5 percent less 'buying power' than in 2002.

Feb. 1 marked 10 years since the official merger that transformed General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church into Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Several years ago, a reader asked us to do some research about a promise he recalled from church leaders in the runup to the merger: "We were told that one reason to merge was that we would have fewer agencies, and it would cost less to do things as a denomination," he said.

We thought the 10-year anniversary was a good time to take a look. So we commissioned retired CPA Don Stauffer, Union, Mich., to examine the financial records in the Archives of Mennonite Church USA and from Mennonite Church Canada. Below (see box) is the result of his research, with help from Lisa Heinz, senior director of operations and chief financial officer for Mennonite Education Agency.

We asked just two questions: How do expenditures nearly 20 years ago compare with expenditures of agencies in the fiscal year ending in 2002, the last before the official merger? And how do those expenditures compare with the most recent year-end financial reports for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA?

Note that we have not asked *why* the numbers changed so significantly. I invited a Mennonite Church USA leader from each board or agency to suggest an explanation, but none was offered. However, there could be several reasons for the decline:

- The Great Recession affected contributions from individuals and congregations nearly everywhere.
- Congregations and individuals have become more interested in local ministries and initiatives and less interested in those administered by churchwide agencies.
- There are fewer members in both Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada than a decade and two decades ago in the predecessor denominations.

The bottom line: The aggregate for expenditures in the most recently concluded fiscal years was $8,216,200 less in absolute dollars than the aggregate of the 1992 expenditures. When adjusted for inflation—which has been 60.3 percent since 1992—the aggregate would have needed to be $46,752,944 in 2011 dollars to have the same "buying power" as the 1992 aggregate.

The past nine years shows a smaller drop. To have the same buying power as the aggregate of 2002 expenditures, the aggregate of all expenditures would have needed to be $32,959,432.67. According to Heinz, churchwide ministries were operating with 55.2 percent less buying power in 2011 than in 1992 and 36.5 percent less when comparing 2002 to 2011.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Expenses summary comparison

	1992	2002	2011
General Conference (GC) Mennonite Church*	$12,685,033	$10,164,302	NA
Mennonite Church (MC) General Board**	611,591	612,259	NA
Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) Executive Board	NA	NA	$2,610,420
Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries (MC)	446,768	456,506	NA
Mennonite Board of Education (MC)	995,969	1,137,203	NA
Mennonite Education Agency (MC USA)	NA	NA	1,141,306
Mennonite Publishing House/Network	5,683,896	5,450,015	2,368,006
Mennonite Board of Mission (MC)	8,737,707	8,539,759	NA
Mennonite Mission Network (MC USA)	NA	NA	9,787,566
Mennonite Church Canada	NA	NA	5,037,466
	$29,160,964	$26,360,044	$20,944,764

*General Conference Mennonite Church had a unified budget and included congregations in Canada, United States and South America.

**Mennonite Church boards maintained separate budgets. Everence (formerly Mennonite Mutual Aid) is not included; its constituency was broader than General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church USA but had no programs in Canada.

Source: This information was compiled by Don Stauffer, CPA. Mennonite Education Agency information was adjusted by MEA's Lisa Heinz.

New MC USA office building opens in Elkhart

Houses 70 staff members of Mennonite Church USA agencies, ministries

Everett J. Thomas

On Jan. 24, Pastors Week participants at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., came to a reception hosted by the MC USA agencies.

The new Elkhart, Ind., office building of Mennonite Church USA is now open for business. Employees began moving into the building at 3145 Benham Avenue, adjacent to the campus of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), during the week before Christmas.

The new building is one of several Mennonite Church USA centers for creative work, training, global communication and logistical support for the mission of the church; other denominational offices are located in Newton, Kan., and Harrisonburg, Va.

The building houses 70 staff members of Mennonite Church USA agencies and ministries, including Executive Board, Mennonite Education Agency, MennoMedia, Mennonite Mission Network and *The Mennonite*—all of whom were previously housed in various locations in northern Indiana. There is room for 10-12 additional staff members in the currently finished space, which measures 35,000 square feet.

"We anticipate that this space will serve the church well as a flexible and low-cost resource now and into the future," says Marty Lehman, director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA.

The facility provides space and technology for communication and collaboration in small and large groups, in informal and formal settings, by phone, through videoconferencing and via electronic messaging. A building dedication is planned for April 14.

"Hundreds of people from across the country have given a total of $11 million to this campaign during very challenging economic times—$5.8 million of which went to the ministries of the Executive Board, Mennonite Mission Network and the Global Mission Fellowship of Mennonite World Conference; $60,000 to Racial/Ethnic ministries; and $5.1 million to the building," says Peter Graber, director for the Joining Together, Investing in Hope campaign, which included the building project. "We are inviting people who have not yet participated to help with the remaining $2.6 million for the building."

He notes that while Mennonite Church USA will be able to secure a loan that will be paid from the operating expense fund, contributions received in the next months will help lower the loan costs and also benefit racial/ethnic ministries across Mennonite Church USA.

The Elkhart office building is a LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green facility, designed and constructed using the U.S. Green Building Council standards for sustainable building. These standards provide a rating system to evaluate building materials, systems, location and management practices to maximize the positive impact on occupants and remain compatible with the local environment and sustainable into the future.

"Creation care is an important biblical value for Mennonite Church USA, and the building's small environmental footprint demonstrates our commitment to this value," says Richard Thomas, moderator of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board. "Also, the energy efficiency of the building will result in lower energy operating costs, which will enable us to spend more contributed dollars for ministry."

During construction, decisions were made based on what made the most sense both environmentally and financially. For example, locally donated lumber and processing were used rather than purchasing wood from a LEED-certified mill.

For the exterior of the building, donations included mature trees for the landscaping and all the seed for the grass and rain gardens. The rain gardens prevent runoff of contaminated water, and catchment areas provide space for the water that runs off the roof and parking areas to be filtered and absorbed into the ground.

DJ Construction Co. of Goshen, Ind., served as the building contractor. Four hundred volunteer hours were recorded in the construction process. *—Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA*

Racial Healing group works for transformation

Leaders call for differentiation of core theological values, cultural practices.

Storytelling is an ancient and universal art, common to all cultures and peoples. So perhaps it isn't surprising that the intentional journey toward racial healing and wholeness in Mennonite Church USA is moving forward with the sharing of stories.

It has been two years since the formation of the Racial Healing Task Group (RHTG), the idea for which came from a Constituency Leaders Council meeting in October 2008. The idea received the blessing of underrepresented racial/ethnic church leaders and the affirmation of delegates at Columbus 2009 convention.

The members of the RHTG, selected for their knowledge about restorative justice approaches to reconciliation, are all white in order to ensure that people of the dominant culture take ownership of the work of racial healing rather than depending on people of color to educate the church about racism. However, the group has chosen to form a unique relationship with racial/ethnic church leaders by making itself accountable to the Intercultural Relations Reference Committee (IRRC), in addition to the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

Charged with helping the dominant white culture of Mennonite Church USA articulate and take ownership of ongoing systemic and personal racism within the church, the members of the RHTG, in a series of meetings with the IRRC, started by confronting racism on an individual level.

"People of color who are Mennonite Church USA members have shared racism stories relating to church, community and daily life," says chairperson Sharon Waltner, former moderator of Mennonite Church USA. "Listening to these stories helped me comprehend how racism exists in today's culture. Most of us from the dominant culture don't realize how racist we really are."

But it's not just about listening to stories, says Iris de León-Hartshorn, who helps oversee the RHTG as director for transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA; dominant culture members need to share their own stories and reflect on the ways they have been taught to think about racism.

"Part of sharing our own present narratives is being able to look at the good, the bad and the ugly of those narratives," says de León-Hartshorn. "I've been a Mennonite long enough to know that power is very difficult for Mennonites to talk about. That's why I think being honest about our narratives is very important for this healing."

It is sometimes the Mennonite church's own history of persecution that makes it hard for the Anglo majority to acknowledge that its narrative is now that of the dominant, privileged culture.

"We continue to act like the martyrdom story of 500 years ago is our current story, and that has kept us from confronting the fact that we're now part of the problem," says Lloyd Miller, RHTG member and mutual aid minister and director of denominational relations for Mutual Aid eXchange. "And it has kept other parts of our church—whether they be our Native American, Latino, African-American, Asian or African brothers and sisters—at arm's length."

In order to be more inclusive, says de León-Hartshorn, the church needs to differentiate between core theological values and more malleable cultural practices; for example, the expression of worship through music.

"That's a difficult issue because music informs our worship, and we don't all agree on what kind of music that is," she says. "For me it cannot be either/or; it has to be about how we can use all our music together in a way that meets the needs of everybody, not just one group."

The RHTG is now focused on inviting dominant-culture Mennonites to acknowledge racial problems facing the church and to take steps toward healing and transformation in their own lives and congregations.

"The only way that we as a church will be transformed in these ways is with a heart change, not just with a head change," Miller says.

The RHTG is offering support to area conferences—three of which have already declared their intention to actively address the issue of racism with the help of the RHTG.

> Listening to these stories helped me comprehend how racism exists in today's culture. Most of us from the dominant culture don't realize how racist we really are.—Sharon Waltner

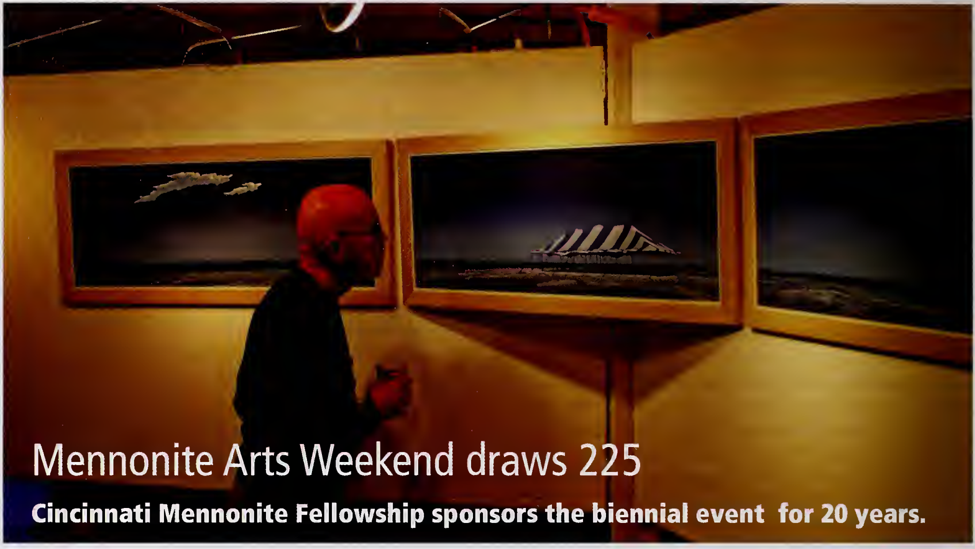
"Each conference is unique, and each has its own culture of working with congregations," Waltner says. "The RHTG does not have a 'cookie-cutter' program to undo racism. Rather, we have assembled an extensive toolkit of resources to assist conferences and others, wherever they may be on their journey of racial healing."

RHTG resources include a PowerPoint Toolkit, Racial Healing Vignettes, the "'I's of Oppression" diagram, a Nested Model for Restorative Justice and suggested reading materials.

More information is available at http://mennoniteusa.org/executive-board/racial-healing/.
—*Jessica Farmwald for Mennonite Church USA*

Mennonite Arts Weekend draws 225

Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship sponsors the biennial event for 20 years.



Photographer Jim Bowman examines the work of painter, sculptor and photographer Phil Epp.

Every other year since 1992, Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship has sponsored a weekend devoted to Mennonite artists. The 2012 event, held Feb. 3-5 at the Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, drew some 225 artists and participants. Mary Lou Weaver Houser, Lancaster, Pa., was the keynote speaker with her presentation called "Galumphing on the Edges." The all-women World's Music Choir from Goshen (Ind.) College brought 38 students to the event.

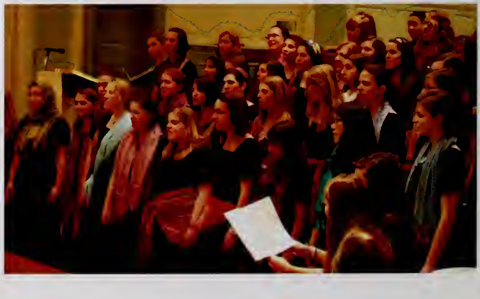
"All of us are straddling complex realities," Houser said in the opening session, "but the unprecedented vision enveloping us in 2012 would daunt previous generations. Edgewalkers, as transitional people, possess an uncanny capacity to see, feel and intuit what was, what is and what could be. … 'Galumphing' is tumbling us pell-mell into a new epoch in history where we get to tinker with the joy and chaos of evolutionary discoveries."

Houser is a spiritual director, artist, gardener and teacher. Her art uses mixed media as well as bamboo she grows on the Houser family farm. She is a member of Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, where she codirects the congregation's Parrot Gallery.

Four sessions on Feb. 4 allowed artists to perform or display their work and talk about the pieces they shared. Artists included painters, photographers, musicians, sculptors and a poet.

Planning committee member Cara Hummel opens the 11th biennial Mennonite Arts Weekend in Cincinnati on Feb. 3.

Goshen (Ind.) College's World's Music Choir sings during the opening session of the Mennonite Arts Weekend on Feb. 3.



Poet and college professor Julia Kasdorf reads her poetry during a seminar at the Mennonite Arts Weekend.

Illustrator, teacher and graphic designer Ingrid Hess (left) and her father, Dan Hess, examine a sculpture made by Herb Weaver.

Jim Bowman, also from Lancaster, displayed his photography and explained how he takes new digital tools to create photoart from random natural subjects.

Deb Brubaker, who conducts the World's Music Choir, specializes in international music. In her seminar she described the process of cataloging original recordings of indigenous African music. The session also included an open-mic time for members of the choir to describe how meaningful the new music is to them as women.

Lee and Susan Dengler, ministers of music and art at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, led congregational singing. Lee is a composer, conductor, singer and music editor. Susan is a singer, conductor, lyricist and music teacher. In their seminar, the Denglers led participants in singing some of their work and described various experiences with their music and lyrics. The Denglers also played a piece commissioned for the 10-year anniversary of 9-11 in which the patron required that "Taps" be included.

Phil Epp, Newton, Kan., works with a variety of media to create paintings, sculpture, photography and public artwork. Participants at his seminar also discovered his humor, and several suggested he could also be a stand-up comedian.

Ingrid Hess, Brockton, N.Y., a teacher, illustrator and graphic designer, led a seminar on illustrating children's books. In her seminar, she led a group through an exercise that demonstrated how difficult it is to create illustrations that do not stereotype people by race.

Poet Julia Spicher Kasdorf, State College, Pa., read some of her poems and explained the context for each. Musician Brad Yoder, Pittsburgh, did the same with his original music. Dancer, choreographer, teacher and arts administrator Katrina Toews demonstrated and discussed her choreography. Herb Weaver, Atlanta, showed slides of his whimsical clay sculptures.—*Article and photos by Everett J. Thomas*

> 'Galumphing' is tumbling us pell-mell into a new epoch in history where we get to tinker with the joy and chaos of evolutionary discoveries.—Mary Lou Weaver Houser

During their seminar, musicians Lee and Susan Dengler talk about the lyrics Susan writes and the pieces Lee composes.

Sculptor Herb Weaver shows slides during a seminar to explain where he gets inspiration for his sculptures.

AMBS: Revelation's influence

Revelation's vision is intended to spark a fresh imagination, says Johns.

Mary E. Klassen

Participants join a conference, area church or denominational ministers for prayers of healing during a Pastors Week worship service. The event was the first in the renovated Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount at AMBS.

The book of Revelation can inspire fear or fanaticism, but at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Pastors Week, Elkhart, Ind., Jan. 23-26, participants were called to faithfulness as they studied the Bible's last book.

Loren L. Johns, AMBS professor of New Testament, said early in the week, "Revelation is not a book that should be believed as much as it is a book that should be responded to in faith, courage, proper worship and a commitment to justice."

In his opening sermon, Johns emphasized the scene in Revelation 5 in which the Lamb, representing the resurrected Jesus, first appears. In the scene, which Johns called the "theological heart of the Apocalypse," the Lamb appears as slaughtered but conquering. "The only path to victory (or overcoming) in Revelation is the path of a defenseless, consistent witness—a faithful, nonviolent witness that is sealed in martyrdom," Johns said. Jesus' death—the pinnacle of his defeat—was actually his victory.

In exploring what this means for the church today, Johns told the 150 participants that the whole vision of Revelation "is intended to create or spark a fresh imagination of what it means to live in the fullness of God's reign … so that we can be faithful now and live into that reality."

Johns, whose doctoral dissertation explored the metaphor of the Lamb in Revelation, outlined themes that are important in the book: everything revolves around worship, death is not defeat, God will judge and overcome evil, salvation and redemption are inclusive of all.

He also addressed different views of the end times that people draw from Revelation, but emphasized that the details of the end times are not as important as the goal toward which Revelation points.

"Heaven and earth are renewed. The Holy City comes down out of heaven from God. God will dwell with the people as their God. They will be God's peoples.

"Eschatology at its best refers to our understanding of the kingdom of God. How do we understand what God is doing in the world? That matters," Johns said. "Eschatology is not about standing around looking up to heaven for Jesus. There are better things we can do while we wait for Jesus."

Quoting an article by Lois Barrett, an AMBS professor who focuses on Anabaptist history, Johns said, "The church in the present age is called to prefigure the City of God, the way things will be in God's future." The emphasis is on modeling a way of life that reflects God's reign today.

Nelson Kraybill, president emeritus of AMBS and also a scholar of Revelation, began another teaching session, saying, "If you don't get the concept of worship, you really miss the point of Revelation.

"A central message of the apocalypse is that other spiritual, political and economic entities lure our allegiance," Kraybill said. "We should read Revelation as a cautionary tale about the ease with which these phenomena become idolatrous." Then he added, "The antidote that Revelation presents for the idolatrous forces so abundant in our culture and our media is robust worship of God and the Lamb."

In a final session, participants took a more active role in answering the question of what the book of Revelation means for the church today. Johns noted that the letters to the seven churches in Revelation all include similar elements: a salutation, commendations, charges and demand for correction, additional warnings, a call to discernment and a promise.

Using that outline, pastors wrote "letters" to their own congregations, modeling ways in which Revelation both honors the ways congregations are faithful and calls congregations to more fully follow Jesus' teachings.

Janeen Bertsche Johnson, AMBS campus pastor, and Jennifer Gingerich, AMBS student, led worship services during Pastors Week.

In addition to Johns, preachers included Iris de León-Hartshorn, director for transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA; Safwat Marzouk, AMBS professor; and Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada general secretary.—*Mary E. Klassen of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

EMU: Accumulation seduces Christians

Walter Brueggemann explores money issues at School for Leadership Training

Cody Troyer

Walter Brueggemann inspires School for Leadership Training participants to move beyond the drive to accumulate toward accepting God's gracious abundance.

Beware of seduction by accumulation. That was one of the money issues explored by Walter Brueggemann, a world-renowned Old Testament scholar, in talks to as many as 700 people gathered at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 16-18.

In his three packed lectures at EMU's annual School for Leadership Training, Brueggemann talked about two narratives: the narrative of accumulation, demonstrated by Pharaoh in the Old Testament, and the narrative of abundance, demonstrated by manna in the desert in the Old Testament and the feeding of the 5,000 in the New Testament.

"The narrative of accumulation dominates our society and is enormously seductive," he said.

Using Pharaoh, Solomon and the parable of Jesus about the rich man who tore down his barns and built bigger ones, Brueggemann demonstrated that this narrative only leads to death, both the death of the wealthy individual and the death of the poor.

"Accumulation promises to make us safe and happy, but it cannot," he said. "Anxiety about scarcity leads to accumulation, which leads to monopoly, which leads to violence."

Brueggemann said God is the source of all bounty, including food, and thus is the central player in the narrative of abundance.

"Moving from scarcity to abundance depends on understanding that the world is God's creation, not a system of zero-sum economics," Brueggemann said. He called on his listeners to practice their faith by living gratefully instead of anxiously.

The accumulation narrative and the abundance narrative are "deeply contradictory," said Brueggemann. "Yet most people try to juggle them and hope no one notices."

Brueggemann called on the church to do "more truth-telling about the deathliness of the [accumulation] system," even if the church's stance is called unrealistic by many. "The gospel is fiction when judged by the empire, but the empire is fiction when judged by the gospel."

In his Jan. 18 talk, Brueggemann said that practicing Sabbath is one way to move from accumulation to abundance.

"Sabbath is a deliberate, disciplined pause in the narrative of accumulation," said Brueggemann. "We are most imitating God when we trust creation enough to rest.

"A society that does not practice Sabbath is a society of depleted selves. And the less self I have the more I want to surround myself with signs and symbols of value to keep persuading myself that there is something good going on in my life even if it is relatively empty at the center."

The 2012 School for Leadership Training was sold out, with 340 people registered. Several hundred more people attended three evening lectures. The theme "God and Mammon: Reframing Stewardship Amid Abundance, Scarcity and Conflict" seemed relevant in the midst of political discussions and debates about the economy, poverty and taxes.

"The way Brueggemann used Scripture to read our current situation was helpful in creatively seeing our story in Scripture and using that to prod us," said Joel Miller, pastor of the Cincinnati Mennonite Church.

Barry Kreider, pastor at Pilgrims Mennonite Church in Akron, Pa., said Brueggemann "breathed life" into familiar biblical stories: "I appreciated the way Brueggemann used biblical studies to follow lines through both the Old and New Testament and connect them."

> Anxiety about scarcity leads to accumulation, which leads to monopoly, which leads to violence.—Walter Brueggemann

Workshops followed the themes of money, finances, poverty, stewardship and business. Referring to a living-more-with-less workshop she attended, seminary student Angela Nash said, "It has been a challenge for me to think about how I can live simply in my community and model that for others, without it becoming like a law, or being judgmental."—*Laura Amstutz of Eastern Mennonite Seminary*

Laurelville retreat celebrates 25 years

Tradition gathers music and worship leaders on 'experimental ground.'

Brian Paff

Marilyn Houser Hamm leads a hymn at the Music & Worship Leaders Retreat at Laurelville Mennonite Camp Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa.

Some 200 individuals from nine different states and one Canadian province gathered at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mount Pleasant, Pa., for the Music & Worship Leaders Retreat Jan. 6-8, marking the 25th consecutive year the program has taken place at the camp.

Allan Rudy-Froese, professor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., served as keynote speaker, addressing the role of confession in worship. Actor and playwright Ted Swartz also led an in-depth workshop on adapting biblical texts for dramatic readings and sketches.

The program has evolved throughout its 25-year history, but its celebration of various musical traditions and hands-on style have become signature elements that bring many individuals back to Laurelville year after year.

In January 1988, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., professor Kenneth Nafziger assembled a small collection of musically minded pastors and worship leaders at Laurelville. Initially billed as a song leaders' workshop, the gathering allowed Nafziger and his colleagues to experiment with familiar as well as newer hymns and arrangements for the forthcoming Mennonite hymnal they had been commissioned to edit.

Hymnal: A Worship Book—the product of countless hours of editing, revision and narrowing of selections, some of which took place at Laurelville—was published five years later, but the need to come together to examine, explore and celebrate music and the strong Mennonite tradition of worship never subsided.

Now known as the Music & Worship Leaders Retreat, the Laurelville gathering happens on the first full weekend of January each year. Registration typically reaches its 200-participant capacity several weeks in advance of the program, a testimony to its popularity and vital role within the context of Mennonite worship.

"The new moon cradled in the arms of the old," Nafziger said, referencing a timeless Native American saying used to describe a waning crescent moon. "To me, that's what we're doing every time we gather for this weekend in January. There is a past. And we don't know what that new moon is going to be, but we're enjoying it in the meantime. It's a thing of beauty."

Joining Nafziger in leadership roles during the weekend were Marlene Kropf, Marilyn Houser Hamm and Swartz. Les Horning, pastor at Christiansburg (Va.) Mennonite Fellowship, has attended the Laurelville event numerous times.

"I am eternally grateful," he says, "for the [resource team members] who have given their gifts to help open our eyes to new ways of thinking about worship, to new ways of thinking about praying, to new ways of thinking about singing and enriching our experience."

The program signifies more than just musical excellence, though. For many, it represents an opportunity to connect outside congregational walls and theological variances, to fellowship, worship and break bread with the broader church.

"[The Music & Worship Leaders Retreat] is a place where politics are set aside and we focus on the things we have in common, things like our faith and beliefs and our worship," says Amy Yoder McGloughlin, pastor at Germantown Mennonite Church, Philadelphia. "It's kind of this experimental ground where people are willing to try some risky things with musical arrangements and worship rituals," she says.—*Brian Paff of Laurelville*

Brian Paff

Jeff Raught (left) and Ted Swartz perform a sketch during the Music& Worship Leaders Retreat.

Rick Warren: The Anabaptists were right

Author of *The Purpose-Driven Life* speaks at Anabaptism-Baptist conference.

California pastor Rick Warren and Anabaptist historian Abraham Friesen were the featured speakers at the third annual "Anabaptism and Contemporary Baptists Conference" held Jan. 30-31 on the campus of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas.

The conference, which drew more than 500 people, featured recent scholarship on the Radical Reformation by SWBTS graduate students and open reflection on the relevance of the Anabaptist movement for the Southern Baptist church today.

Rick Warren, the well-known pastor of the Saddleback congregation and author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, was effusive in his praise for the impact of Anabaptist thought on his ministry. In 1981, after a year of working 18-hour days trying to establish a new congregation in the rapidly growing community of Lake Forest, Calif., Warren said he was exhausted and depressed.

> Almost everything we do at Saddleback we stole from the Anabaptists.—Rick Warren

Then, while on a retreat of prayer and fasting in the desert, he began to read the writings of the 16th-century Anabaptists. "That encounter," he told the gathering, "transformed my ministry. Almost everything we do at Saddleback we stole from the Anabaptists."

"I've studied the Anabaptists all my life," Warren said, "and I believe they were right. The roots of global missions are not in the magisterial reformers; they are in the Radical Reformation."

Warren went on to express appreciation for the Anabaptist influence on contemporary Baptist understandings of mission, discipleship and ecclesiology.

In his welcome to the conference, Paige Patterson, president of SWBTS and one of the architects of the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s, echoed Warren's words.

"Baptists are indebted more to the radical reformers than to the magisterial reformers," he said. In January 2010, Patterson inaugurated the first annual Radical Reformation Day at SWBTS, in commemoration of the original Anabaptist baptisms in Zurich on Jan. 21, 1525.

In addition to presentations by Baptist scholars on various Anabaptist theologians, Abraham Friesen, a Mennonite Brethren historian from Fresno, Calif., gave the major address for Mennonites. In his chapel presentation, Friesen argued that the Dutch humanist Desidarius Erasmus played a decisive role in early Anabaptist beginnings, particularly their emerging understanding of the Great Commission and believer's baptism. Included among the attenders was a group of 25 German Mennonite and Baptist pastors, many of them recent immigrants from Russia, associated with the Bibel Seminar Bonn, a Mennonite seminary that has had a formal partnership with SWBTS for nearly a decade.

Although Baptist scholars such as William Estep Jr. have long been interested in Anabaptist history, the recent emphasis on Anabaptism at SWBTS is also driven by a current theological debate unfolding within the Southern Baptist circles. One side of that debate, represented by Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Seminary, has sought to anchor Baptist theology firmly within the Calvinist tradition. Patterson, by contrast, considers it crucial to keep the Baptist tradition rooted in an Anabaptist orientation.

In his conclusion, Rick Warren said, "Study the Anabaptists. They have more than you could possibly imagine. We have in these great saints and martyrs an understanding of what it means to be Christlike that nobody else has understood so clearly."—*John D. Roth*

Choice Books sales up

Saw a 5.15 percent increase in 2011

Choice Books, an inter-Anabaptist book evangelism ministry, purchased/sold 5,375,677 books in 2011, a 5.15 percent increase over 2010. Choice Books serviced more than 11,000 permanent displays nationwide at the end of the year in supermarkets, mass merchandise stores, airports, drug stores, travel centers, gift shops, army and air force bases and a variety of other retailers.

According to the Association of American Publishers' latest figures through October 2011, religious books were the only major print category to see sales growth in 2011 in the United States.

The increase was 9 percent over 2010 for the 10-month period. The only other major categories to make gains in 2011 were e-books and audiobooks.

Choice Books operates through a network of seven regional distributors who work cooperatively with a central office in Harrisonburg, Va. The organization has approximately 250 staff and volunteers and services more than 11,000 displays scattered across the continental United States, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.—*Choice Books*

Hope trumps angst for mission leaders

African agency leaders call for healing of the 'memory of missions.'

A mission leader cried out to God to grant desperation to the North American Mennonite Church when more than 60 administrators and scholars from 14 North American mission and service agencies gathered Jan. 16-21 in Chicago for the annual Council of International Anabaptist Ministries.

"Make us desperate to bear children of God. Give us the desperation of street children jumping into dumpsters to find something to eat," prayed Nelson Okanya, president of Eastern Mennonite Missions.

Okanya's plea came in response to a meditation by Randy Friesen of MB Mission (formerly Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International). Friesen opened the plenary worship session with the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, drawing out themes of barrenness, desperation and hope. Friesen encouraged churches and missions to recognize their areas of barrenness and respond with the innovative and risk-all desperation that Tamar demonstrated so that hope can break into the world.

The barrenness of North American Anabaptists was illustrated through statistical studies, showing that Anabaptist congregations are losing their children. Matthew Krabill, a graduate student at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., and Jamie Ross, a graduate student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., reported their findings on the current generation of Anabaptist youths' inability to articulate their own faith, much less share it with others.

Conrad Kanagy, professor at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, shared results of a survey he led for EMM showing a negative growth rate in Lancaster, Pa., churches and exploding expansion in mission-planted churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Most of the gathered mission experts agreed that this study accurately represented the larger global picture, and they grieved the failure of their generations to pass on the message of Jesus as good news within the North American context. They also mourned the complicity of mission with colonialism and imperialism.

Two agency leaders born in Africa—Okanya, and Hippolyto Tshimanga, Mennonite Church Canada Witness mission partnership facilitator—took a compassionate and forgiving stance, urging council participants to remember that early missionaries never heard of global citizenship and should not be held to today's standards of awareness.

"I wouldn't be here today without those missionaries," Okanya said. "Mission has been good for my people."

"We need to heal the memory of missions," Tshimanga said. "It is a disease among North American Mennonites. The reality is that in Asia and Africa, people have moved on, but in North America we live with the guilt of memory."

James Krabill

Martini Janz describes ministry in what is now Democratic Republic of Congo, following a Council of International Anabaptist Ministries banquet honoring three Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission couples who served in Congo: Janz and her husband, Art, Annie and Peter Falk, and Elvina and Rudy Martens.

Later, Tshimanga said that the healing would begin by remembering the whole picture of what mission has been, the good with the negative aspects. An unbiased look at mission must go hand-in-hand with deep study of biblical mission, Tshimanga said.

Sara Wenger Shenk and Martini Janz offered "whole picture" stories of their missionary lives, telling of both beneficial and detrimental aspects of mission practice. Wenger Shenk grew up as a missionary kid in Ethiopia, ministered in Eastern Europe, helped plant churches in the United States and is now president of AMBS.

Janz spoke of her mission career, which began 61 years ago on a steamer chugging out of New York's harbor, sharing with vulnerability about her shortcomings as well as her love for the Congolese people, for whom she continues to pray daily. She told about ways she had judged and wounded the girls and women she worked with because she didn't understand the cultural motivations for their actions. Janz also confided that during her ministry in Congo, she at times had been moved to anger, tears and despair.

Not having attended the sessions describing the declining youth population in North American congregations, Janz unknowingly offered healing balm for the angst of many council participants when she quoted one of her own mission mentors, who said, "When these girls get to be grandmothers, you will see that you have made a difference."—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen for Mennonite Mission Network*

Kenyan Mennonites make history by writing it

Nine Kenyan delegates, three editors proof historical manuscript in Nairobi.

Debbi DiGennaro

Caren Okello (left) and author Francis Ojwang, who holds his son, write at the Mennonite Guest House in Nairobi, Kenya.

Nine Kenyan delegates and three editors gathered at the Mennonite Guest House in Nairobi the last week in January.

Their task: to proof the manuscript of a history of the Kenya Mennonite Church (KMC). The idea for this book, chronicling KMC's 50-year history, was birthed in 2003 at the Mennonite World Conference summit in Zimbabwe, in a discussion between Kenyan Bishop Dominic Opondo and David W. Shenk, author and Eastern Mennonite Missions global consultant.

"This is the account of the acts of the Holy Spirit in calling forth and forming the Mennonite Church in Kenya," writes Francis Ojwang, primary researcher and author of the book, in the foreword. "Just as ancient Israel and the early church made a very high priority of writing their history of the acts of God among them, so also the KMC needed to record their journey with Jesus Christ."

The nine delegates were bishops, pastors and leaders, each representing dioceses of KMC. They spent three full days pouring over the nearly 200-page manuscript. They read each section aloud and then discussed whether the story it portrayed was accurate—moving on only after reaching consensus, in the African way. There were stories to amend, adjectives to tweak and—because of the different ethnicities involved—misspelled vernacular words and place names to correct.

During the reading, David Shunkur, a Maasai pastor from Olepolos, read a section of the manuscript that described his own congregation's story. Shenk, who served as a consulting editor, said, "It was a moving scene to see Shunkur proofing a paragraph about history he had made himself years before. The delegates showed an enormous amount of ownership in the process." The book will be published by Uzima Publishing House, the Anglican publishing house in Kenya, early in 2013.—*Debbi DiGennaro of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH US!

2012 TOURS

ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR STEVE LANDIS (April 25-May 4)
HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 25-June 7)
GLORY of RUSSIA: MOSCOW and ST. PETERSBURG (July 3-13)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
LANDS of the BIBLE: JORDAN and ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR TYLER HARTFORD (July 19-28)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 23-September 3)
TOUR to LITHUANIA (in partnership with LCC International University) (September 12-19)
MENNONITE STORY in POLAND and UKRAINE (September 18-29)
SCENIC AUTUMN CRUISE: CANADA and NEW ENGLAND (October 6-16)
MEDA TOUR to ETHIOPIA and TANZANIA (October12-24)
SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (October 13-22)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)
MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
MEDA in MOROCCO (April 2-12)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25)
MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN and CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28 – May 7)
EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15)
GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 6-19)
ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
THE BRITISH ISLES (England, Scotland and Wales) with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (October 17-28)
CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (November 1-15)
EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (December 9-15)

2014 TOURS

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JAMAICA - Its PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 18-27)

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Relationships percolate at Top of the World

Three Hindus, three Christians make up the Nepalese coffee shop staff.

Entering the front door of Top of the World Coffee in Nepal, the aroma of fresh roasted brew draws you toward the corner of the café.

Across the brick-colored floor and beyond the black metal chairs and tables, a smiling Dale Nafziger works behind the coffee roasting machine, the source of the aroma.

It's not Starbucks but even better, particularly for the soul. This coffee shop is the vision of Dale and Bethsaba Nafziger, long-term Mennonite Mission Network workers.

"It's very different. It's homey and cozy," says Bethsaba of Top of the World, which they opened Dec. 11, 2011. "We thought a coffee shop would be a wonderful place to be with the people."

The Nafzigers are fishers of men and women, only their bait is a blend of steaming cups, caring conversation and business integrity. They share God's love through their business ventures. From selling frozen French fries, pizza and fruit juice to roasting coffee beans and pulling shots of espresso, they model Anabaptist principles and business ethics as a way of bearing witness to God's love and power.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal is in South Asia between India and Tibet. Hindus make up more than 75 percent of the country's population, while Christians are less than 2 percent. Economic life among Nepal's 30 million citizens has been improving. While about 25 percent of the population lives on less than the international poverty level of $1.25 per day, or $1,000 annually, a decade ago the rate was 41 percent.

Still, conducting business is tough in Nepal, the Nafzigers say. For many business owners—even Christians, unfortunately—paying bribes and avoiding taxes is believed to be as necessary as having customers. Taxes can be as high as paying a worker's salary, Dale says.

The Nafzigers opened Top of the World (because they are in the Himalaya Mountains) just before Christmas in a residential neighborhood. Patrons have been steadily increasing, they say, but as with any business, it hasn't all been a piece of coffeecake.

"We had an excellent first day, but after that we quickly confronted the reality of what it means to run a restaurant on a daily basis," the Nafzigers write in their monthly newsletter update.

Two mission workers, Abigail and Tim Rask, arrived last September from Texas and from a different agency to join in the venture and handle day-to-day operations. Bethsaba is also a registered nurse and midwife, and both Bethsaba and Dale are leaders in church. Dale preaches and advises church leaders regularly.

Through the coffee shop and other business ventures, the Nafzigers aim to show that integrity is important, even if it costs more. As the deadline approached for completing Rask's business visa, a bit of "speed money" would have expedited the process, Dale says. Rask and the Nafzigers declined to pay the bribe, and Rask's visa was completed just 10 minutes before the deadline.

top of the world coffee
Fresh-Roasted Specialty Coffee

Photo provided

Top of the World Coffee Shop's primary mission is to be "God-honoring in every aspect."

The Nafzigers are intentional about hiring people of different faiths and backgrounds. Three Hindus and three Christians make up the coffee shop's six-member staff. "We meet the staff every day and pray with them," says Bethsaba. "We never force them to pray with us, but we see them as being happy to come and pray in the morning."

Bethsaba recalled an experience that illustrates the type of godly relationships they hope the coffee shop will foster. Before they met and eventually married, Reena and Prakash Thapa were working at the Nafzigers' home. Particularly Reena witnessed the type of love that Dale and Bethsaba bestowed on their daughters, Shova, 14, and Sushma, 12. Reena Thapa felt devalued by her family, which is the case for many women in the culture.

The love she witnessed and received from the Nafzigers led her to accept Christ. Reena and Prakash, a carpenter, fell in love while meeting at the Nafzigers' and now have a daughter. They now attend "Tejwasi" (Radiant) Church with the Nafzigers.—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

College thanks employee with Habitat house

Mayorga family volunteers 500 hours; Goshen College raises $25,000 needed.

Jordan Kauffman

From left: Goshen College President James Brenneman, Zoila and Eddie Mayorga, DaVonne Harris (director of student activities) and sophomore Isaac Fast break ground at the site of the Mayorga's new Habitat house on Jan. 24.

As nonprofit organizations struggle to cope with dwindling funds from the government, Goshen (Ind.) College is stepping in to help one of its own employees build a house through Habitat for Humanity.

Eddie Mayorga has worked for the college's Physical Plant Department for over 10 years, and he and his family were well on their way to receiving a house through Habitat for Humanity. The organization, which helps people in need build affordable housing, usually raises money for houses through federal loans and donations, but recent changes in federal policy left a $25,000 gap in funds for the Mayorga family's house.

If I could hug everyone I would. I primarily thank God for this opportunity and for the support the college is offering me.—Eddie Mayorga

Since Mayorga and his family had completed most of the 500 volunteer hours required of homeowner partner families, Habitat decided to continue with the scheduled build but asked Goshen College to help raise $25,000 and help build the house.

On Jan. 24, a group of about 25 people gathered for the groundbreaking of Mayorga's Habitat for Humanity home. The college has hosted several fund-raising events for the cause, including a talent show, an indoor marathon and a community lunch. The build was to take place over the week of the college's spring break, beginning Feb. 25, and some students opted to stay in town over the break to help.

Originally from Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, Mayorga lived in Los Angeles for 15 years after emigrating to the United States. There he met his wife, Zoila, and moved to Goshen in 1998 with their son, who is now 13.

Before the Mayorgas' transition to Goshen, they hadn't heard of Goshen College or Mennonites. According to the Mayorgas, their move to the Midwest was motivated by a desire to leave the violence and turbulence of inner-city life. They were also attracted by the jobs in the Goshen area.

Now, after 14 years in Goshen, the Mayorgas will have their own home.

During the groundbreaking, Mayorga said in Spanish, his first language, "If I could hug everyone, I would. I primarily thank God for this opportunity and for the support the college is offering me."

Mayorga added, "I'm thankful to President Brenneman, my co-workers, the student body and the college as a whole for helping me and my family in this project."

Eddie Mayorga

Student Life, the Athletic Department and student clubs have helped with promoting the fund-raiser. T-shirts are also being sold, and all the profits from sales are going toward the house.

"This opportunity to work with Habitat is a great way to reflect our mission of servant leadership that we are focusing on this year," says Bill Born, vice president of student life. "We are happy to show support for one of our own employees."—*Jacob Maldonado Nofziger and Alysha Landis of Goshen College*

Everence, Praxis Mutual Funds applaud Hershey

Chocolate manufacturer announces plans to reinforce cocoa sustainability.

The Hershey Company announced on Jan. 30 that it will begin making its Hershey's Bliss chocolate products with 100 percent cocoa from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms, which have met comprehensive sustainability standards to protect the environment, employees and communities.

The commitment is a necessary and long-awaited first step to improving the chocolate manufacturer's supply chain accountability.

Hershey will use an independent, third-party certification system to ensure its Bliss cocoa is grown sustainably—and without the use of forced and child labor.

In West Africa, where 70 percent of the world's cocoa is grown, tens of thousands of children are forced to work on cocoa plantations—particularly in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, the world's two top cocoa exporting nations.

Many of these children are smuggled in from extremely poor countries, such as Mali and Burkina Faso.

"The sweet taste of chocolate can turn bitter, especially when one learns children are forced to work on cocoa farms," says Mark Regier, director of stewardship investing for Everence and Praxis Mutual Funds. "This announcement from The Hershey Company is a welcome response to the labor abuses happening in cocoa farms throughout West Africa. We commend Hershey for taking steps to address these issues."

Since 2009, Praxis Mutual Funds (which are advised by Everence Capital Management) has encouraged Hershey to address its cocoa bean sourcing, encouraging equitable pay for farmers and fair labor standards for workers.

In 2011, Praxis led other concerned investors in conversations with Hershey to discuss the company's first corporate responsibility report, and in October 2011, Praxis organized an investor call with leaders of CocoaLink, a Hershey program providing pertinent information (including child labor awareness) through a cell phone network to farmers in Ghana.

Praxis is also leading conversations with Kraft Foods Inc., the world's largest chocolate manufacturer, in an effort to help that company strengthen cocoa sourcing policies and local development activities aimed at eliminating forced child labor and increasing income for smaller farmers.—*Everence*

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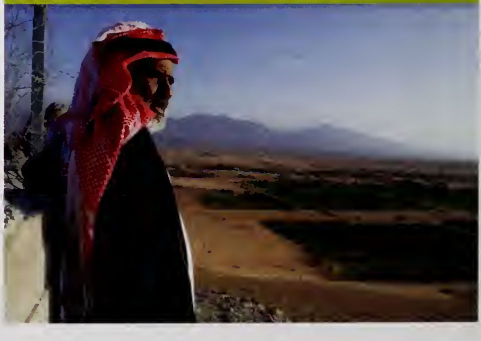

CALENDAR

The Concert Choir of Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster (MCCL) will perform in a ***Children's Choir Festival*** at Hempfield United Methodist Church on March 24, at 7 p.m. Also participating in the event are Children's Choir of Lancaster (CCL), directed by Drue Bullington, and Bel Canto Children's Choir, directed by Dr. Joy Hirokawa. CCL is hosting the event. MCCL's Concert Choir, under the direction of Darlene Hein, has 38 singers, grades 6–8. MCCL is a program of Lancaster Mennonite School. For more information call 717-898-0398 or go to www.mennonitechildrenschoir.org.

Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society will host a ***book signing and reception*** for Everett Thomas and his novel, *Johann*, on March 17 during Celebration of Church Life. The event will be held at 3 p.m. on the Lancaster campus of Lancaster Mennonite School.

WORKERS

Martin, Kenton S., was licensed as pastor at Palo Alto Mennonite Church, Pottsville, Pa., on Jan. 15.

OBITUARIES

Beachy, Anna Bertha King, 92, Springs, Pa., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Earl L. Beachy (deceased). Parents: Daniel H. and Mary Mae Hollida King. Children: Gary Beachy, Marilyn Lehman; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Durst Funeral Home, Frostburg, Md.

Bell, Beverly Kay Taylor, 72, Wauseon, Ohio, died Jan. 22. Spouse: Duane Calvin Bell. Spouse: Milfred and Betty Tufts Taylor. Children: Elaine Voelzke, Amy Isakson, Lori Goetz; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 28 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Bender, Lois Pauline Gingerich, 90, Kalona, Iowa, died Feb. 6. Spouse: Wallace P. Bender (deceased). Parents: Amos J. and Nannie Yoder Gingerich. Children: Nancy Swartzendruber, Ruth Anne Bankston, Richard; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Dueck, Peter G., 94, Altona, Manitoba, died Dec. 19, 2011. Spouse: Helena Gerbrandt Dueck (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Anganetha Giesbrecht Dueck. Children: Henry, Margaret Thiessen, Esther Krahn; nine grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Ebersole, Joyce Helen Van Horne, 81, Sterling, Ill., died Jan. 11. Spouse: Charles Edward Ebersole. Spouse: Russell P. Ebersole. Parents: Robert and Bertha White Van Horne. Children: Donna Beard, Christine Knutz, Dorrine Evitt, Kathline Bilderback, Kenneth Ebersole, step-son Robert Hallock; 15 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 14 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Fransen, Jacob "Jake," 81, Vineland, Ontario, died Jan. 18, of cancer. Parents: Nicholas "Nick" and Tina Klassen Fransen. Children: Harold Peters-Fransen, Gordon Epp-Fransen, Joan Fransen; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 22 at Vineland UM Church.

Frey, LuEtta June Schmidt, 82, North Newton, Kan., died Dec. 30, 2011. Spouse: Raymond Eldon Frey (deceased). Parents: Abraham and Elizabeth Schmidt Schmidt. Children: Marcene Entz, Melissa Beitler, Sherwin; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 7 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

Graber, Erna Friesen, 94, Freeman, S.D., died Jan. 11. Spouse: Hilbert Graber (deceased). Parents: John K., and Marie Epp Friesen. Children: Roberta Linscheid, Marlene Graber Gesner; four grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 15 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman.

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Herald Press

Guilford, Paul, 84, Wauseon, Ohio, died Jan. 2. Spouse: Christine Sampson Guilford. Parents: Harold W. and Leah Williams Guilford. Children: Janet Ruple, Deanna Ramsdail, Dallas; 12 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 7 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Herr, Herbert Eugene "Gene," 79, Newton, Kan., died Jan. 1. Spouse: Mary Yutzy Herr. Parents: Herbert and Mary Landis Herr. Children: Phillip, Karl, Ellen Awe; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 6 at Hesston Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan. Funeral Mass: Jan. 7 at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Newton.

Horst, Connie Marie, 49, Wauseon, Ohio, died Jan. 24. Parents: Dale and Velma Horst. Funeral: Feb. 11 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Kolb, Linwood, 79, Spring City, Pa., died Jan. 18, of complications from pneumonia. Spouse: Alverda Kolb. Parents: Sam and Helen Clemmer Kolb. Children: Karen Hydutsky, Kyle Kealey, Roland, Roger, Ray; 10 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 23 at Vincent Mennonite Church, Spring City.

Lehman, Rhoda K. Krady, 85, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 3. Spouse: Martin W. Lehman. Parents: D. Stoner and Frances Miller Krady. Children: Rachel Lehman Stoltzfus, J. Conrad; six grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 7 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen. Memorial service: March 17 at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, Sarasota, Fla.

Miller, Donovan J., 71, Indianapolis, Ind., died Feb. 2. Spouse: Barbara A. Miller. Parents: Samuel E. and Rachel E. Rheinheimer Miller. Children: J. Vaughn, Shawndra B. Miller; two grandchildren. Memorial service: Feb. 5 at First Mennonite Church, Indianapolis.

Miller, Kaitlyn Grace, Kalona, Iowa, was stillborn on Dec. 9, 2011. Parents: Ledru and Annette Yoder Miller. Sibling: Addison Miller. Funeral: Dec. 17 at West Union Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Miller, Marlin J., 77, Wauseon, Ohio, died Jan. 18. Spouse: Esther Christner Kusky Miller. Spouse: Freida Schrock Miller (deceased). Parents: Charles and Bessie Frey Miller. Children: Darla Fruse, Dawnell Yoder, Valarie Schlatter, LaVon Miller; 10 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Step-children: Carla Callahan, Daniel Kusky; five step-grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Feb. 25 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Reber, Barbara Katherine Bender, 86, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 31. Spouse: Donald D. Reber. Parents: David Elmer and Elizabeth Emma Rediger Bender. Children: Karen Sue Senft, Beth Ann Reber Wenger, Mary Kay Hostetler, Carol Jean Brundege, Jon; 11 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Feb. 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Rhoads, Barbara Ann Marshall, 64, Mt. Joy, Pa., died Dec. 21, 2011, of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Lawrence Rhoads (deceased). Parents: Franklin and Rena Shifflett Marshall. Children: Robin A. Levan, Dale; three grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 24 at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Elizabethtown, Pa.

Ruby, Joseph, 93, Pigeon, Mich., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Helen Hoffman Ruby. Parents: Aaron and Catherine Swartzendruber Ruby. Children: Diane Maust, Delores Esch; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 16 at Michigan Avenue Mennonite Church, Pigeon.

Schrag, Palmer, 93, Freeman, S.D., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Marjorie Swatelle Kaufman Schrag. Parents: John M. and Maria Graber Schrag. Children: Crystal Underwood, Cindy Zeiser, Richard; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 16 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Schrock, Iona Ruth Hartzler, 96, Hesston, Kan., died Jan. 19. Spouse: Wilbur B. Schrock (deceased). Parents: Ira and Martha Yoder Hartzler. Children: Janet Zook, Leta Bontrager; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 23 at Schowalter Villa Chapel, Hesston.

Shipley, Arlene Francis Steiner, 94, Sterling, Ill., died Jan. 28. Spouse: Ralph Shipley. Parents: Cleo and Mary Swope Steiner. Children: Neal; one grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 4 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Short, Mary Nafziger Kauffman, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 26. Spouse: Virgil Short (deceased). Spouse: Lawrence Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Amanda Schmucker Nafziger. Children: Carol Beck, Elaine Rupp; three grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Step-children: Mary Ann Yoder, Joe Short, Ned Short, Tim Short; eight grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Slabaugh, Grace I. Martin, 97, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 22. Spouse: Paul T. Slabaugh (deceased). Parents: Amos and Amelia Egli Martin. Children: Phil, Don, Steve, Jane Garber; eight grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 27 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Summer, Luella Mae, 102, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 11. Parents: Chris and Barbara Zehr Summer. Funeral: Jan. 15 at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Swartley, Renee Burkholder, 56, Perkasie, Pa., died Aug. 26, 2011, of cancer. Spouse: Philip Swartley. Parents: Paul G. and Miriam T. Burkholder. Children: Heather, Erin Alletag, Amber; three grandchildren. Funeral: Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Swartzendruber, Iona Lucille Brenneman, 90, Kalona, Iowa, died Jan. 6. Spouse: Roy Swartzendruber (deceased). Parents: Erlis and Martha Marner Brenneman. Children: Dale, Arliss, Margaret Beikman, Kenneth, Duane, Mary Althaus, Lucille Brenneman; 17 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 9 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Troyer, Christian Ira, 101, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 8. Spouse: Joella G. Murray Troyer (deceased). Parents: Jephtha S. and Ada Mae Yoder Troyer. Children: Philip, Sally Miller, Arthur; 12 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Yoder Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Troyer, Dana Orion, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 25. Spouse: Mildred Yoder Troyer. Spouse: Verna Burkholder Troyer (deceased). Parents: George C. and Kathryn Sommers Troyer. Children: Don, Robert, John; three grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 25 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Wahl, Helen Doerksen, 87, Winnipeg, Manitoba, died Jan. 13. Spouse: Cornie Wahl (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Margaret Klippenstein Doerksen. Children: Albert, Reginald, Kenneth; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 17 at Altona Senior Centre, Altona, Manitoba.

Waltner, Robert H., 90, Freeman, S.D., died Jan. 3. Spouse: Cleva Schrag Waltner. Parents: Henry Jos. and Anna P. Waltner Waltner. Children: Ruth Mueller, Barb Yoder; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 7 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Yoder, Edna Viola Shantz, 90, Hesston, Kan., died Jan. 27. Parents: Samuel and Ida Shantz. Children: Clifford, Yvonne Sieber, Shirley Oberst, Sharon Yoder; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 30 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Yoder, Edwin E., 90, Springs, Pa., died Jan. 4. Spouse: Lela Egli Yoder (deceased). Helen M. Ash Yoder (deceased). Parents: Edward M. and Anna Beachy Yoder. Stepchildren: Donald Livingston, Arthur Landis, Larry Landis, Josephine Livingston, Rita Miller. Funeral: Jan. 7 at Springs Mennonite Church.

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RESOURCES

Third Way Allegiance: Christian Witness in the Shadow of Religious Empire by Tripp York (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $12.95) makes the case that both nations and the church require total allegiance and that Christians should choose Christ over state.

Rethinking Religion: Beyond Scientism, Theism and Philosophic Doubt by Alan Soffin (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $29.95) shows how to conceptualize a "God" who is in and of the cosmos rather than also beyond it, as atheists claim.

The Jesus Factor in Justice and Peacemaking by C. Norman Kraus (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $12.95) addresses the impact of Jesus on the practice of conflict resolution interventions, such as restorative justice, peacebuilding, mediation and trauma healing.

God's Healing Strategy: An Introduction to the Bible's Main Themes by Ted Grimsrud (Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, $17.95) is a revised edition that not only interweaves updates and refinements throughout but also adds two entirely new chapters, on Jonah, Job and Daniel and on the Psalms. The book identifies God's healing love as the central theme of the Bible.

Blind Spot: War and Christian Identity by Dorothy Garrity Ranaghan (New City Press, 2011, $11.95) presents thorough research on the teachings of the church and Scripture on war and violence in an attempt to remedy a blind spot to these traditions as they relate to contemporary issues.

Kicking at the Darkness: Bruce Cockburn and the Christian Imagination by Brian J. Walsh (Brazos Press, 2011, $18.99) reveals the imaginative depth and uncompromising honesty of the singer and songwriter's Christian spirituality.

The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus by Allen Verhey (Eerdmans, 2011, $24) seeks to counter the medicalization of death that is so prevalent today. Verhey uncovers in the biblical account of Jesus' death a helpful paradigm for dying well and faithfully.

The Ethical Vision of Clint Eastwood by Sara Anson Vaux (Eerdmans, 2011, $30) analyzes 15 of Eastwood's best-known films from narrative, artistic and thematic perspectives.

All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible by Dean B. Deppe (Eerdmans, 2011, $25) offers a user-friendly guide to biblical exegesis and interpretation. Deppe focuses on eight methods that biblical scholars use.

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Project manager needed to develop new Sunday school curriculum for children and youth to be published by MennoMedia and Brethren Press. Responsibilities also include project oversight, staff recruitment and supervision. Must have experience or education in theology, Christian education or publishing. Full-time, salaried position for the length of the project, projected to be three to five years. Preference given to candidates who can work out of a MennoMedia or Mennonite Church office. ***MennoMedia*** is receiving applications at searchcommittee@mennomedia.org.

Voluntary service: **Spruce Lake Retreat** in the Poconos of northeast Pennsylvania seeks campground host for family campground, 14 weeks over summer. Details at www.sprucelake.org/jobs/volunteers.html. Apply to: Retreat Center Director Dan Krug, 800-822-7505, x128; e-mail host12@sprucelake.org; fax 570-595-0328; mail to Spruce Lake Retreat, 5389 Route 447, Canadensis, PA 18325.

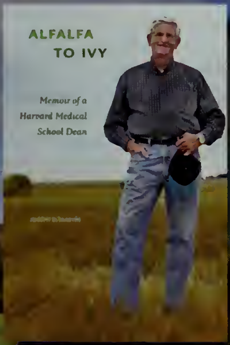
'***Bicycle the San Juans***' Celebrate the beauty of God's creation and benefit **MCC**! Cycle five days through outstanding scenery and diversity of terrain on the "paradise islets" of the Evergreen State. Aug. 5-10, 2012. For registration information, contact Trish Hershberger-Handrich, 503-201-7605 or trish.handrich@gmail.com.

Head cook and ***lifeguards*** at **Camp Keola**. Camp Keola is a member of Mennonite Camping Association and is located at beautiful Huntington Lake in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. www.campkeola.org. Keola is a seasonal camp, open from approximately mid-June through August and during weekends through October. Camps range from 60 to 150 people. To apply, complete application found at www.campkeola.org; click on "employment." Questions to larry@campkeola.org.

Young adult retreat, May 18-20 at **Pine Lake Camp** in Meridian, Miss. Ages 18-35 are welcome to come to our third annual retreat. Details on Facebook at Gulf States Mennonite Young Adults or call 601-507-1442.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. See advertisement on page 54. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. In the Books section type the author's name. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org. See advertisement on page 54.



ALFALFA TO IVY :
Memoir of a Harvard Medical School Dean

The human story of Joseph Martin's journey from rural origins to highly regarded leader makes *Alfalfa to Ivy* a compelling read. His deep-seated Mennonite values guided him with humility and optimism through tumultuous changes in modern medicine – changes that he helped guide while serving as Dean of Medicine and Chancellor of the University of California, San Francisco Medical School and, later, Dean of Harvard Medical School. This memoir captures what is possible in our lives.

"This memoir is remarkable for its detail and precision. It is a work of scholarship and leadership." Excerpts from J Daniel Hess' Blog

Visit www.alfalfatoivy.com to order this book and for book signing dates.

Pathopraxy: passionate action

Jon Heinly is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite School.

Young people are less likely than adults to analyze away an opportunity for action.

Senior prank consultation is an interesting element of my job. While it is not listed in my job description, students come to me each year to share their ideas, using me as a sounding board, either forgetting that I'm on the school faculty or thinking it wise to test the idea with someone before trying to pull it off. Maybe they want to make sure this particular prank will not hinder their ability to participate in their graduation ceremonies. At times, this has prevented pranks that might be problematic, such as those that would block the school's emergency vehicle entrances.

Senior pranks are only one area where youth frequently fail to think through the consequences of their actions. In youth ministry circles, it is common to hear people make note of the scientific studies showing that the brain's prefrontal cortex, the part responsible for complex decision-making and discerning consequences, isn't fully developed until our mid-20s. In other words, those in their teens and early 20s are still growing in their ability to think through decisions.

As a result, youth are more inclined to respond out of passion than to weigh consequences carefully. This often manifests itself in negative behaviors such as sexual activity, substance abuse, reckless driving or the many comical moments captured on YouTube videos.

While youthful passion can result in immoral and destructive decisions, this immaturity can also be a gift to the world and to the church.

For instance, youth are generally more likely than adults to give money to a homeless person on the street because they see a need and are moved to compassion, whereas an adult is more likely to think critically about the situation and consider the reasons for the homelessness or the possibility that it is only a farce. In such a situation, a young Christian is more likely to give money to someone who may abuse it, but an adult is more likely to miss the opportunity to meet a legitimate need.

Also, youth and young adults tend to be quick to respond to issues related to human rights, and college students are often on the forefront of advocacy. Another example is seen in the many high school seniors who pursue a gap year of mission or service following graduation, perhaps with little or no concern about the financial ramifications of such a choice.

In these ways, young people are less likely than adults to analyze away an opportunity for action.

There are several theological words that describe categories of prioritization. Different church traditions or individual Christians tend to incline more toward one than the others. Orthodoxy, right belief or doctrine, orthopraxy, right action or practice, and orthopathy, right feeling or affections, are potentially competing priorities as we think about our beliefs, actions and passions. While young Christians are shaped by their own tradition, a fourth category could be used to describe a shared priority among young people.

Youth and young adults are inclined to pathopraxy—an emphasis on a passionate or emotional pursuit of action. Often this passion for action trumps orthodoxy, orthopraxy or orthopathy. While an action may come from a desire to do what is right, it is more likely to be about what feels right. Unlike the other three categories, pathopraxy lacks an up-front emphasis on "ortho" or right. Instead, passion and action come first.

Passionate action leaves a great deal of room for mistakes, so it is tempting for adults to step in and prevent negative consequences. However, it is crucial that we allow room for pathopraxy while also coming alongside with words of guidance. If we only do the latter but fail to do the former, we may ultimately squelch their spirits, which could lead them to redirect their passion elsewhere.

Christian history is full of youth and young adults who acted with tremendous passion. I'm not convinced they all thought thoroughly about the consequences of their decisions before they acted. The disciples of Jesus, the early Anabaptists, countless missionaries and the flood of young Mennonites moving into urban areas around the country are all examples of young people acting in response to passion.

Alongside orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy, our church must make room for pathopraxy, allowing space for healthy, youthful mistakes. Youth need mentors who will guide in godly pathopraxy, which sometimes involves hard lessons. Meanwhile, the church needs this youthful passion to spark us all to action. While it may be the messiest way faith is lived out, it may also be the place of our church's greatest vitality and growth. TM

FILM REVIEW

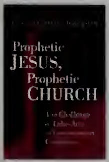
The Artist (PG-13), a leading contender for a best-film Oscar (and may have won by now), is a silent film (though it includes music and some other sound) about the end of the silent era of filmmaking. It appeals both to film buffs, with its many references to other films, and to popular audiences, with its blatant melodrama and humor. The acting is excellent.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

Sharing Possessions: What Faith Demands (Eerdmans, 2011, $18.99) and

SHARING
POSSESSIONS

Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians (Eerdmans, 2011, $23) are two recent books by Luke Timothy Johnson. The former is a new edition of a book first published in 1981. There he reflects on the connection between being a Christian and the way we own and use things. Johnson writes: "The things we own and use, like our sexuality, lie close to the bone of our individual and collective sense of identity." He considers the biblical view of possessions in a nuanced way and concludes with observations on the community of goods and almsgiving.



Prophetic Jesus argues that Luke-Acts is a literary unit that "reveals a prophetic vision of both Jesus and the church." Johnson defines prophets as "human beings who speak and act for God to other humans." In applying the prophetic spirit found in Luke-Acts to today, he asks what would make a church prophetic in Luke's view. His answer: "its total dedication to responding to the call of God in every circumstance, more than to cultivating institutional self-interest." To do this, the church must be filled with the Spirit and live in prayer, he writes, faithfully seeking to discern the Spirit's movement.—*gh*

Journalism and that tattooed girl

What does a bestselling murder mystery series from Sweden have to teach us about the importance of journalism to a democratic society? Quite a bit.

The late Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy—*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*—have already sold more than 50 million copies. In addition, three Swedish films have been made, based on the books, and last December, David Fincher's film of the first book came out to much acclaim, including five Oscar nominations.

The books, though overwritten and implausible, are arresting, and what carries them is the character of Lisbeth Salander, who has a photographic memory and can hack into almost any computer. She also takes vengeance on men who have tortured her and who torture other women. (The Swedish title of the first book translates, "Men Who Hate Women.")

The other main character of the series is Mikael Blomkvist, who is a journalist working for *Millennium*, an investigative business magazine with a conscience. He is also not very plausible, but that often goes with the territory of murder mysteries.

Nevertheless, as Eric Alterman writes in the January/February issue of *Columbia Journalism Review*, "what makes the trilogy so valuable to the cause of journalism are the things it gets right."

Alterman, who is Distinguished Professor of English and Journalism at Brooklyn College and the CUNY School of Journalism, argues that the profession of journalism has failed "to make a compelling case for itself, at least in the eyes of the readers, viewers and listeners who do not appear to be concerning themselves terribly much with its rapid disappearance."

But readers or viewers who go to these stories to find out what happens next will also be exposed to basic issues of journalism and to its importance in bringing justice to a corrupt society, in this case one that supports and protects men who do horrible things to women.

For example, Erika Berger, Blomkvist's lover, best friend and editor, tells him: "Your job description as a journalist is to question and scrutinize critically—never to repeat claims uncritically, no matter how highly placed the sources in the bureaucracy."

Imagine how different things might be if we lived in a society that valued such critical thinking.

Alterman points out ways the trilogy shows the frustrating details of journalism. It acknowledges that "media organizations are rarely honest about themselves." It portrays "the psychological vulnerability that journalists feel when they try to travel independent of the pack."

And Larsson is true-to-life in his treatment of the role money plays in the profession. Alterman writes: "Journalists, few people understand, are awfully poorly paid." And Larsson has an editor attempt to balance the monetary cost of a story against its societal value. This attention to money is practically invisible in most journalism-based entertainment.

While many of these details are "peripheral to the story of Salander's struggle against the murderously evil genius she is battling," Alterman writes, "without Blomkvist, the (really) bad guys would win."

Although it shouldn't take a popular murder mystery series to wake us up to the importance of journalism, I'm glad if it helps.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

Over the four generations my family attended church-sponsored schools, we witnessed the movement away from simple centers of learning to become more like state institutions with all their expensive trimmings—defined benefit retirement plans, tenure, sabbaticals and the impressive titles and robes of distinction at ceremonies. (The announcement of Anabaptist Teaching Centers in the same issue sounds hopeful.)

Today some clamor for the right to serve in positions of more power and authority. But in light of the New Testament teaching of servanthood and even the secular awareness of a simple nun deserving the Nobel Peace Prize, why would a Mother Teresa rather be a Pope?—*John I. Kauffman, Exeland Wis.*

Mary is not a co-mediator

I do feel that Protestants, including Mennonites, often have not given proper respect to Mary the mother of Jesus. However, I found that I could not agree with a number of ideas in the article by Laurie Oswald Robinson.

Here are several of these ideas: Mary was set free from the stain of original sin at her birth; she intercedes for me to God, and Jesus and is co-mediator of salvation; and she is the Mother of God and mother of the Mother Church. I do not believe these ideas reflect the teachings of the Bible or Anabaptist beliefs. Instead of being the lead article, it should have been on the opinion page.

I hope "the views expressed do not necessarily represent the official position of Mennonite Church USA." I believe the Bible and the Mennonite church believes and teaches that there is only *one* mediator between God and humanity, and that is Christ Jesus. —*Rachel Guedea, Goshen, Ind.*

Occupy movement not God's work

I found the January editorial not only slanted to Everett Thomas' view but dividing as well. By supporting this group of progressive malcontents, Thomas has damaged his reputation of "expressing" the Mennonite point of view. I say that because the Occupiers have done more harm than good, destroying local business, attacking police, using and dealing drugs and rioting.

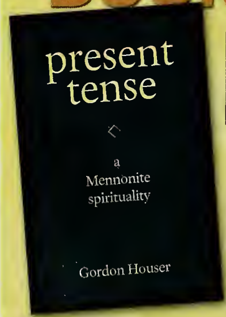
The editorial doe not represent my view of what God's work is.—*Jeff Vardaman, Goshen, Ind.*

Corrections to February articles

The cost of the Mennonite Central Committee's Wineskins restructuring will ultimately total $2.5 million, not $1.5 million.

Tina Stoltzfus Schlabach has submitted her resignation as pastor of the Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., but will continue to serve there until late May.

Books from the editors



Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality, by Gordon Houser, explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

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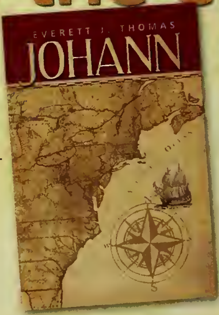

Everett Thomas' novel ***Johann*** is historical fiction describing the life of Mennonites in Pennsylvania in the 18th century as the French and Indian War unfolded.

$8.95

Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (www.lmhs.org), amazon.com or betterworldbooks.com

Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
—*John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

Johann was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
—*Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

Signposts: Committed to the Scriptures

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.—2 Timothy 3:16-17 (TNIV)

Studying the Bible is one of the most important things a Christian can do. But from the reports I hear around the church, we're struggling to maintain this basic Christian discipline. It's not that we don't have enough Bibles. A recent poll found that 89 percent of Americans own a Bible, with the average home having 4.1 Bibles.

The underlying problem, I am told, is that we have less time, both in private and public, to read and study the Bible. I fear that the problem may lie even deeper. Perhaps we are not keeping our commitment to "persist and delight" in the words of Scripture, as stated in the following words from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*: "The Bible is the essential book of the church. Through the Bible, the Holy Spirit nurtures the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ and guides the church in shaping its teaching, witnessing and worship. We commit ourselves to persist and delight in reading, studying and meditating on the Scriptures. We participate in the church's task of interpreting the Bible and of discerning what God is saying in our time by examining all things in light of Scripture. Insights and understandings that we bring to the interpretation of Scripture are to be tested in the faith community" (p. 22).

This is a call to recognize the Bible's unique status and to live joyfully under its authority. Again, our confession states: "All other claims to represent an authoritative word on matters of faith and life must be measured and corrected by Scripture through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the community of faith." And, "The church confesses and recognizes the authority of Holy Scripture; it does not take upon itself the right to give the Scripture its authority" (p. 23). These commitments underscore the importance of the third missional trait and signpost from our church's Purposeful Plan.

Missional character trait: The Bible is normative in this church's life. It sets the standard for our life as a people.

Signpost: The church reads the Bible together with the presence of the Holy Spirit to learn God's good and gracious intent for all creation, the way of salvation, and the identity and purpose of life together.

I've been heartened by the widespread affirmation for a "year of the Bible" across our church. Over the next months, we'll share news about the way our church is moving toward that goal.

One word of warning: Reading the Bible can influence our thinking on social issues. In 2007, the Baylor Religion Survey showed that the more frequently people read the Bible, the more they will lean one way or another on issues that divide our church and society. For example, they found that "support for abolishing the death penalty increased by about 45 percent for each increase on the five-point [Bible-reading] scale." Again, they learned that for each increased level of Bible-reading frequency, support for the Patriot Act to fight terrorism "decreased about 13 percent." Further, they found that increased Bible reading made people more likely to believe that science and religion are compatible and that Christians should reduce their consumption in order to be ethically faithful. On the other hand, the survey found that frequent Bible reading correlates with increased "opposition to abortion and homosexual marriages and unions."

We mustn't think, therefore, that the differences among us will vanish if we only read the Bible more often. Rather, we must commit ourselves to Spirit-led, faithful, communal interpretation of Scripture, centered in the ministry of Jesus. Persisting and delighting in the study of Scripture can help equip us for every good work that God has called us to do. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

We mustn't think … that the differences among us will vanish if we only read the Bible more often.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Good soil

Gordon Houser

But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.—Luke 8:15

When Jesus told the parable about the sower and the soils, he exhorted anyone in the crowd with ears to listen (Luke 8:8). This begs the question, Are we listening?

This listening ("shema" in Hebrew) is not just the perception of sounds. It's paying attention in a way that leads to obedient action.

Jesus then told his disciples that the good soil produces people who hear God's word, hold it in a good and honest heart and bear fruit with patient endurance.

That phrase "patient endurance" jumped out at me as I read this passage. One reason is that I'm not a patient person. Jeanne, my wife, is the gardener in our family. I may help plant, but I don't like weeding or watering. I like harvesting. But as any gardener knows, there is no harvest without the patient work of planting the seed and tending the garden until the seed bears fruit.

Lent can serve as a time to tend our own spiritual soil, to learn to hear God's word to us.

Gardeners also know the importance of good soil. When we moved into our house back in 1984, the place where we later had our garden consisted of a tight, clayey soil, not good for growing things. We tilled it up and mixed in compost, leaves and even some manure (which our neighbors didn't appreciate). After several years of doing this, the soil loosened up, and our harvest increased.

Good soil is receptive to seed. It's loose and can breathe. It's filled with nutrients from various sources, such as compost and manure.

Not to draw too fine an analogy, if we want a good heart and patient endurance, we will need to be open to receiving God's word to us. We will need to breathe. We will need to be fed and nurtured from various sources, such as learning from Scripture, from our brothers and sisters in Christ, from our walk in God's Spirit.

We are in the season of Lent, the period in the church calendar from Ash Wednesday to Easter when we focus on penitence and fasting. The word comes from a Middle English word for springtime, the time when we plant gardens.

Lent can serve as a time to tend our own spiritual soil, to learn to hear God's word to us.

This parable in Luke is one of the few Jesus explains to his disciples. He says, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God" (v. 10). "Secrets," or "mysteries" in Greek, refers to things that would be unknown if God did not reveal them.

Jesus did not usually explain his parables but invited listeners to engage them, much the way we read murder mysteries to find out who killed the victim. What engages us and keeps us reading is that the writer makes it difficult. We have to work to find out who the murderer is.

The second part of v. 10, where Jesus quotes from Isaiah ("looking they may not perceive ...") bothers us. It sounds harsh, but it's also the way things are. To get Jesus' proclamation about the kingdom of God, people have to be open to its message. There's listening, and there's really listening. There's struggling to get the message, and there's "meh" (a shrug).

It's not a matter of intelligence. Jesus points out elsewhere that children get it, the poor often get it, but the religious leaders often don't. Members of his family and those in his hometown don't get it. The rich don't get it; they've got too much to lose.

During Lent, let us nurture our soil and listen for God's word to us. And be patient.—*gh*

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TheMennonite April 2012 | Volume 15, Number 4

CONTENTS

AMBS LIBRARY ELKHART, IN

12 A holy hybridity
—Isaac S. Villegas

15 Chocolate-covered Jesus
—Marty Troyer

18 Bruised, beloved and healing the broken
—Laurie Oswald Robinson

22 Now-millennialism
—Duane Hershberger

25 Color-coded Bible study
—Ruth O'Neil

28 Living with less, loving people more
—Jan Johnson

32 MCC supports victims of Syria conflict—Gladys Terichow

33 Pastor works to overcome 'allergy to evangelism'—Jessica Farmwald

34 Ten-year-old girl studies alongside adults
—Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

38 Pies and performances for peace—Melanie Hess

40 Peace vigil going strong since 2003—Serena Townsend

41 Mennonite Men 'join hands' with Mission Network—Andrew Clouse

42 Three women get MDS-renovated homes
—Emily Will

44 Where is authority in the church?—Leonard Gross

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
47 For the Record
51 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

28

7

34

ON THE COVER: "The Moon, the Dove and the Foot Washer" by Daniel Bonnell

TheMennonite
April 2012 | Volume 15, Number 4

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POSTMASTER send address changes to:
The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1819
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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In the name of Christ?

There are many things to respond to in the February article "32 People Will Lose Their Jobs." Needless to say, one hopes Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) will maintain a sense of continuity with such a major displacement of expertise and corporate memory.

My main interest in this letter is to comment on the use of the phrase "in the name of Christ." Since borrowed from the Book of Acts in the 1940s, it has neatly expressed the motivation of MCC work. It has long been used on canned meat to identify the character of MCC work. Only recently has it become a formal identity sign and symbol.

There has been concern over its usage by partners on the field for many decades in a number of places. One case I recall well occurred in 1982. Israel had invaded Lebanon, and the normal food supplies were disrupted amid hundreds of thousands of displaced people. MCC's partner for a long time in the Middle East was the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC). This agency asked for a large shipment of MCC meat for the refugees. Since the recipients were mostly Muslim, they asked if this meat could be supplied without "In the Name of Christ" on the label. This created a major problem for MCC, since all our meat cans carried the phrase.

The MCC executive committee, the operational board, wrestled with this issue for an entire two-day meeting. Some members said, "In the Name of Christ" was MCC and could not be exempt, even though most MCC assistance did not have such a label. Other members knew MCC was well known as a Christian agency from the witness of staff rather than labels on material. They thought that out of respect for the recipients it would be appropriate to honor this request.

Finally, during the debate, MCC veteran administrator John Hostetler, director of material assistance and meat canning, observed that MCC could buy canned meat on the open market and ship that to the MECC. After further deliberation the committee agreed that meeting a food need following Matthew 25 was more essential than organizational identity. MCC bought and shipped the meat.

All service, especially in overseas relief, is a complex enterprise. I consider the adapting MCC did in 1982 as a faithful expression of authentic service "in the name of Christ." I trust MCC will continue to have a flexible edge in all its ministries.—*John A. Lapp, executive secretary emeritus, Mennonite Central Committee*

In the February issue, there was a news item about the reorganization of Mennonite Central Committee. A question came up, which I've heard before, about whether MCC should change the slogan on the items it sends for relief: I'm referring to "In the name of Christ," which is on the cartons and cans of food and other relief items.

This is not the first time this question has come up. At a meeting some years ago, it was brought up, and I made the suggestion that MCC change it to, "in the name of Jesus," since "Jesus" does not have the same connotations of military and cultural oppression that "Christ" has in some cultures. Those who were at the meeting seemed to think it was an idea worth pursuing, but I have never heard anymore about it. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (NKJV). I would like to know whether MCC has considered this change and if so, why hasn't it been made?—*Elvina Martens, Goshen, Ind.*

A response from Ron Byler

Thanks to Elvina for her helpful words. We are indeed followers of Jesus, and we are grateful for the many ways members and congregations of Mennonite Church USA respond in word and deed through Mennonite Central Committee. The New Wine/New Wineskins process included 2,000 people from 50 countries in more than 60 meetings. Various options for identifying MCC were explored in many committees. In the end, we agreed to continue using the phrase "in the name of Christ," which has identified MCC's ministries for decades.—*J. Ron Byler, executive director, Mennonite Central Committee U.S.*

Occupy movement is God's work

I am always saddened by letters such as Jeff Vardaman's in the March issue. Yes, the Occupy movement is doing God's work—by turning our national attention away from the Tea Partiers' "I, me, mine" attitude back to one of recognition of the we and the suffering. Yes, there have been those associated with the Occupy movement who had ignoble intentions and actions. But let us not denigrate the entirety of a much-needed outcry because of the actions of the few. Should we thus disregard the actions of the Middle East populace in their striving for freedom because some have resorted to violence, or should we look at the big picture and objectives and find the worthy goals and ways to support that vision? I know which I choose.—*Kris Long, Arvada, Colo.*

Wants to be less Mennonite

I see a few people in the pictures in your February issue who are not obese. Are these people really Mennonites?

Obesity seems to be a Mennonite value. Have you covered this topic in your rag? Everence will give you a milk-bucket load of stats, complete with a hallucinogenic BFD, I mean a BFI (body fat index) chart.

For my part, I would like to donate 15 pounds to somebody who wants to be "more Menno," as I would like to be "less Menno," were it possible.

Carry on the good work.—*Merle Snyder, Denver*

Likes two articles

I wish to commend *The Mennonite* for two well-written and important articles in the February issue: John Eby's "Race and Culture are Not the Same" and John Rempel's "Naming What Divides Us."

Eby carefully distinguishes "culture and the negative expression of ethnocentrism on the one hand and the discriminatory aspects of racism on the other." It is not culture that is dangerous; it is racism, namely "white privilege" and "negative attitudes and discriminatory treatment … because of race" that is destructive.

In conversation with Iris de León-Hartshorn, I was happy to learn that the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board's intercultural relations work has corrected some former language to clarify this distinction.

To Eby's article I would add the importance of a "theological culture," i.e. biblical faith that takes shape in a distinctive culture of discipleship and community. Christian faith must find expression in culture; it likely will be countercultural, in what Rodney Clapp called "a peculiar people—the church as culture" in his provocative book.

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

In this Easter issue, we address several elements of Holy Week: The cover story includes a poignant footwashing story (page 12) and the editorial imagines what God the Father was experiencing at noon on Good Friday. But Marty Troyer (page 15) calls us to remember the many events of Holy Week without the usual veneer.

"Siphoning attention to the Easter bunny is not the only way we escape Jesus during Holy Week," Troyer says. "We adults are much more sophisticated. We elude Jesus' humanity via the warm glow of theology itself."

In his Grace and Truth column (page 8), Isaac Villegas describes Easter as "a rupture in the system, a crack in the establishment's foundation. Easter is a fissure that reveals a power of life, unbounded by our world of vengeance. Easter is an invitation into the mysterious power of resurrection, of new life."

On page 18, Laurie Oswald Robinson recounts how Kathy Wiens developed a new life after being abused as a child. Robinson says that the "safe embrace" of the church "shaped Wiens' passion as an adult to transform her childhood hurt into hope for others."

We are also pleased to reveal one of the winners in this year's photo contest (page 6). This photo was among a record number of entries, and we congratulate the other winners as well: Dennis Gingerich, Cape Coral, Fla.; Tim Kauffman, Harrisonburg, Va.; and Anna Yoder, Hesston, Kan. The photo contest provides our designer with a stock of photos to use for illustrations, and we anticipate publishing more of them in the next year.

Finally, we're proud of Serena Townsend. She is a senior at Goshen (Ind.) College and served as an intern with us this semester. See Serena's Opinion piece on page 31.—*Editor*

Everence releases statement on contraception

ELKHART, Ind.—In response to the current national debate about federal regulations that mandate health-plan coverage for contraception and sterilization, Everence released a statement on Feb. 24 intended for Everence employees and the church agencies Everence serves. Everence also received an inquiry from the *Wall Street Journal* about Everence's position.

"Mennonites and related Anabaptists," says the statement, "have not held values that prohibited them from using contraceptives. So Everence does not have a values conflict with this requirement."

The statement also calls for "clarity over political rhetoric."

"Emergency contraceptives are included in the mandate," says the statement. "Abortifacients are not. The casual vernacular 'morning-after pill' is not a useful term, because it confuses the two. Contraceptives (including emergency contraceptives) stop ovulation or hinder fertilization. The (federal) mandate and Everence insurance plans will continue to exclude abortion-inducing treatments."

An Everence spokesperson, who declined to speak on the record, said that Everence consulted with four physicians—two men and two women—from within their constituencies in preparing the statement.—*Everett Thomas*

MWC appoints new operations team

BOGOTÁ, Colombia—In January, César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), unveiled a new staff structure developed with the help of James and Karen Klassen Harder of Bluffton, Ohio.

The growth and maturity of MWC, say the Harders, means that the office of the general secretary will need to delegate more responsibility to management staff in key program areas.

The first step for García was to establish an Operations Team. The appointments so far include the following:

- Len Rempel of New Hamburg, Ontario, as Chief Operating Officer responsible for finances and budget, maintaining and monitoring staffing, policies, job descriptions;
- Anna Sorgius of Strasbourg, France, as Chief Administrative Officer responsible for managing the general secretariat office, membership, database, archiving, translators;
- Liesa Unger of Regensburg, Germany, as part-time Chief International Events Officer responsible to lead the organization of MWC international events such as Executive Committee and General Council meetings and Global Assemblies;
- Ron Rempel of Waterloo, Ontario, as part-time Chief Communications Officer responsible for managing and planning the global communications strategy and overseeing the communication program that currently includes news service, *Courier* magazine and the website.

Still to be appointed is a Chief Development Officer for managing and planning a global strategy for fund-raising and capacity building.—*MWC*

Bev Moyer

'Polar Plunge' a winner in photo contest

"Polar Plunge" by Bev Moyer has been named winner in the Work/Service/Play category in *The Mennonite*'s annual photo contest. The photo shows Franconia Mennonite youth and young adults at Branchwood Park in Telford, Pa., on Jan. 1, 2010 .—*The Mennonite*

Kansas lawmakers mark Bethel's 125th year

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—A Bethel College group heard the college's 125th anniversary year made part of the official public record.

The group included President Perry and Dalene White along with former Bethel presidents E. LaVerne Epp (and Marilyn Epp) of Lawrence and Doug Penner of Topeka, as well as Bethel alumni.

The "distinguished alumna" of the group was Rep. Judith Loganbill, a six-term Democrat from Kansas' 86th district (Wichita) and a 1975 Bethel graduate, who last fall got the process started for writing a resolution declaring 2012 Bethel's "quasicentennial year" and made sure it was read in the Kansas House on Feb. 15.

Sen. Carolyn McGinn, whose district includes all of Harvey County, where the college is located, picked up the resolution for reading in the Senate that afternoon.—*Bethel College*

Everence provides over $900,000 to people in need

GOSHEN, Ind.—More than 2,000 families across the country received over $924,000 in needed financial assistance last year as part of a unique Everence grant program.

In 2011, the Everence Sharing Fund program provided these matching grants to 811 congregations. The grants help people facing financial distress because of lost employment, medical bills or those struggling to pay for basic living expenses. The program also supports other church needs, such as community aid or service projects.

When the matching contributions of the congregations, chapters and employers are factored in, the total impact was more than $2 million.

The Everence grants are funded primarily by members who own Everence products or use Everence Federal Credit Union banking services. Because of the organization's unique tax status, money that would be paid in federal taxes is instead distributed through mutual aid programs like the Sharing Fund.—*Everence*

Pastor, peace activist Peter Ediger dies

LAS VEGAS, Nev.—Pastor, peace activist and poet Peter J. Ediger, 85, died Feb. 16 in Las Vegas after an illness.

A lifelong activist and advocate for nonviolence, social justice and pacifism, Ediger was a member of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker community and co-founded Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service in 1989.

Ordained by the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1954, Ediger pastored several Mennonite congregations, including Arvada (Colo.) Mennonite Church, until 1986. His ministerial credentials were "laid aside" in 1987 for sexual misconduct.

He was born Aug. 1, 1926, to Jacob H. Ediger and Margaretha (Wiens) in Inman, Kan., and preceded in death by his former wife, Marjorie Reimer Ediger, and brothers Abraham and Menno. He is survived by his sisters, Katherina Epp, Marie Regehr, Anne Martin and Elma Kauffman; children Irene, Joe, Janice and Duane; and three grandchildren.—*Mennonite Weekly Review*

First gathering occurs of Mennonites in Fairbanks

FAIRBANKS, Alaska—Eleven Mennonites met in Fairbanks on Feb. 4 for worship and fellowship in what may have been the first Anabaptist gathering in that city. After a potluck lunch and a few hymns, John David Thacker, pastor of Prince of Peace Mennonite Church in Anchorage, Alaska, led a discussion of the article "What Is an Anabaptist Christian?" by Palmer Becker. Thacker and Gary Martin, also of Prince of Peace, flew to Fairbanks for the meeting.

Some of the participants had attended Prince of Peace while they lived in Anchorage. Others had contacted the Anchorage congregation inquiring about a Mennonite presence in Fairbanks. There has never been a Mennonite congregation in Alaska's second largest city. Prince of Peace is the only Mennonite Church USA congregation in the state.

The group committed itself to meeting monthly for worship, study and fellowship.—*John David Thacker*

Goshen student youngest in music competition

GOSHEN, Ind.—At 19, Henry Stewart is the youngest semifinalist in an international composition competition, and as a sophomore at Goshen College, he is the only undergraduate in the Villiers String Quartet's New Works Competition, held annually in London. The competition is limited to original, unpublished works for string quartet by composers aged 35 and under from all over the world.—*Goshen College*

Medair photo

MCC partners aid Afghans suffering from war

To deliver nutritional care to young children and expectant mothers in remote areas of Afghanistan, the staff of Medair, a Swiss faith-based nongovernmental organization and a Mennonite Central Committee partner, have to travel by horseback in the winter.—*MCC*

An Easter story

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church

At a Durham (N.C.) city council meeting in 1968, with his handgun tucked into his belt for all to see, C.P. Ellis, the Exalted Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan, was spewing his usual racist diatribes. A black woman, Ann Atwater, was sitting a couple rows behind him. Her eyes locked onto the Klansman's neck, and with a small knife in her hand she started to lunge toward Ellis, intending to kill him. Fortunately, Atwater's friends saw the knife in her hand and pulled her back into her seat.

A couple years later, Ann Atwater found herself as the co-chair of a citywide committee for desegregating the schools. At the time, Atwater was an admired black leader in Durham. The other co-chair of the committee was a respected leader of the white community, none other than C.P. Ellis, the man Atwater had tried to kill.

At the first meeting, after Atwater got out of her car, Ellis called her over to his. He wanted to show her something, he said. Ellis popped open his truck, unfolded a blanket, and showed her his .32 caliber revolver.

"I come prepared," he said.

Ann looked down at the gun, then turned to C.P. and said, "C.P., that's your God," as she pointed at his gun. She pulled out the large Bible from under her arm (because in those days activists showed up to meetings with Bibles), and said, "This is mine. We'll see which one is stronger."

As Ellis and Atwater sat through meetings, they found common ground: They were among the poorest people in town, and their children went to some of the worst schools in Durham. To everyone's shock, they became friends through their work in the community.

Easter is a rupture in the system, a crack in the establishment's foundation.

This is an Easter story because new life happened where death should have had the last word. The hate each person had for the other should have led to death—if not an actual killing, their mutual hate should have led to the many small deaths that make us a little less human: the ways we kill the possibility of friendship and common life.

On that first Easter morning, Jesus' disciples were invited into a new world. With Christ's resurrection, a new reality was opened up in the cracks of the old. With the empty tomb, the impossible became reality.

For C.P. Ellis and Ann Atwater, friendship seemed impossible. According to the old social order, these two people were to treat each other as a disease that led to death. Not only were they willing and able to kill each other, but other people in their communities threatened death if they worked together. When C.P. answered the phone late at night, he listened as old friends threatened to kill him if he continued to work with Atwater.

But death would not have the last word. This is an Easter story because new life happened where there should have been death. This is a resurrection story because a power no one could control broke through hardened ways of life and created unheard of possibilities: that a militant, black radical and an Exalted Cyclops let their lives be mixed together. They found themselves becoming kin, members of the family of God.

C.P. Ellis died in 2005, abandoned by his white friends; he was considered a traitor to their Southern way of life. When he let God's resurrection flow through his life, Ellis became a threat to the old, comfortable world of white power.

That's what Easter does to us as we live amidst the powers of this world. Easter is a rupture in the system, a crack in the establishment's foundation. Easter is a fissure that reveals a power of life, unbounded by our world of vengeance. Easter is an invitation into the mysterious power of resurrection, of new life.

Resurrection opens our eyes to an invisible power that changes hearts and minds, a power of endless creation in the midst of destruction, a flow of eternal life and love in our world that we call "God": the One who creates light in the midst of darkness, the One who frees slaves from their masters, the One who raised Jesus from the grave.

Note: To learn more about the story of C.P. Ellis and Ann Atwater, see Osha Gray Davidson, The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South *(UNC press, 2007).*

Church as a rhizome?

On Jan. 22, Rafael Erasmo Arevalo, a Mennonite pastor from Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras, was beaten and killed following an evening worship service he had led with a congregation in the nearby town of Veracruz. The murder took place on World Fellowship Sunday, a day designated by Mennonite World Conference as an occasion for Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations around the world to remember that we are part of a global family of faith.

Since the tragedy, I have been thinking more about the meaning of the "global church." The Anabaptist tradition has understood—rightly, I believe—that the most basic context of the Christian life is the local congregation. Here brothers and sisters in Christ gather for singing, Bible study, admonition, discussion and prayer. Here we eat together, work together and share in each other's joys and sorrows. The body of Christ, we have taught, is not an abstraction but a living reality made visible in the face-to-face relationships of real people.

What would it mean concretely to share in the suffering of those with whom we claim a connection?

Intellectually, I know that more than 4,500 murders occur in Honduras every year; I have not grieved for each of them. So why, given our local view of the church, does Arevalo's death trouble me so deeply? Just how is my congregation connected to the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña or to the congregations Arevalo served in Santa Rosa de Copán or Veracruz?

Unlike the Catholic Church, the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has no pope. We have not understood the unity of the church to be anchored in a doctrine of apostolic succession or a high view of the sacraments. We do not have an authoritative body of doctrine (like Calvin's *Institutes*) or a unifying statement of faith (like the Augsburg Confession). So what does World Fellowship Sunday mean in a tradition with an impoverished theological vocabulary for describing the church beyond the local congregation?

I recognize that at some fundamental level we are indeed "united in Christ" (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 2:13-16), that we are "one in the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3-6). But at a more practical level, what are the bonds that connect the Mennonite congregations gathering for worship in Indonesia, Benin, Taiwan, Mexico, South Dakota and Honduras?

One impulse in thinking about the unity of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship is to describe our relationship in historical terms: We are connected because all of us join in a taproot that can be traced back to the Anabaptist movement of the 16th century. Or perhaps we are inclined to describe the taproot in theological language: We all share a core set of foundational Anabaptist convictions (though who defines those convictions remains ambiguous).

Lately, I have been pondering a different image. Instead of a taproot, consider a rhizome. Rhizomes are plants that propagate by sending out a profusion of roots horizontally beneath the soil. Occasionally, these roots develop nodes that send sprouts up in unexpected places; but underground those sprouts are joined in a complex interconnected web that defies clear mapping on an organizational chart.

Aspen trees, like lilies or bamboo, are rhizomes. The Pando colony of aspens in Utah consists of nearly 50,000 trees extending over 100 acres; yet beneath the soil it is a single living organism. In fact, scientists have determined that damage done to trees in one part of the grove is "sensed" by trees at a far distance.

One reason Arevalo's death mattered to me is that I have had students from the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña in my classes at Goshen (Ind.) College. My wife lived in the home of a Honduran Mennonite family for three months while she was in college. My home congregation in Millersburg, Ohio, has had a longstanding relationship with Honduran Mennonite churches—in fact, I heard the news of Arevalo's death from my brother-in-law, who happened to be leading a group of construction workers on a service trip to Honduras.

I know all metaphors have their limits. Are these personal threads of connectedness enough to define a global fellowship? What would it mean concretely to share in the suffering of those with whom we claim a connection? What would it look like for our congregationally oriented tradition to become more committed to promoting rhizome growth? TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Mass incarceration: the fundamental fact of U.S. life

Most of us, I imagine, have not spent time in prison. Thus, we cannot know quite what it is like to be incarcerated. Yet many of our fellow citizens are incarcerated. In fact, writes Adam Gopnik in "The Caging of America" (*The New Yorker*, Jan. 30), "Six million people are under correctional supervision in the U.S.—more than were in Stalin's gulags."

Gopnik writes that "a prison is a trap for catching time." The relentless ennui is suffocating. "The basic reality of American prisons is not that of the lock and key but that of the lock and clock," he writes. Time stops.

Given the inhumane horror of being in prison, the greater horror is how ubiquitous it is in our country. "For a great many poor people," writes Gopnik, "particularly poor black men, prison is a destination that braids through an ordinary life, much as high school and college do for rich white ones."

He adds that "more than half of all black men without a high school diploma go to prison at some time in their lives" and calls such mass incarceration "the fundamental fact of our country today, … as slavery was the fundamental fact of 1850." In truth, he writes, "there are more black men in the grip of the criminal-justice system—in prison, on probation or on parole—than were in slavery then."

Just as startling as the number of people jailed today is how much the prison population has grown in the past 30 years. "In 1980," Gopnik writes, "there were about 220 people incarcerated for every 100,000 Americans; by 2010, the number had more than tripled, to 731." This growth has huge consequences on our society. In the past 20 years, "the money states spend on prisons has risen at six times the rate of spending on higher education." The irony here is that the single greatest factor in reducing recidivism (relapsing into criminal behavior) is education.

And, as is pointed out often, the cost of keeping a prisoner is much greater than the cost of educating a person. For example, says Karin VanZant, CEO of Think Tank and the National Circles Campaign, studies show that by looking at third grade reading scores you can figure how many kids will drop out of high school before they graduate, and many of these will end up in prison. In Ohio, instead of investing $7,000 per year to raise reading scores, they are spending $37,000 per year for a prisoner.

Gopnik also points to the brutality of U.S. prisons. "Every day," he writes, "at least 50,000 men … wake in solitary confinement, … locked in small cells where they see no one, cannot freely read and write, and are allowed out just once a day for an hour's solo 'exercise.'" Add to this the existence and threat of prison rape (see Gopnik's quote on page 11), and you have a horrible situation.

Gopnik looks at some recent literature on prisons and crime and encounters some interesting insights. For example, "Crime is not the consequence of a set number of criminals; criminals are the consequence of a set number of opportunities to commit crime," he writes. If you close down an open drug market in one neighborhood, it does not necessarily move to another neighborhood.

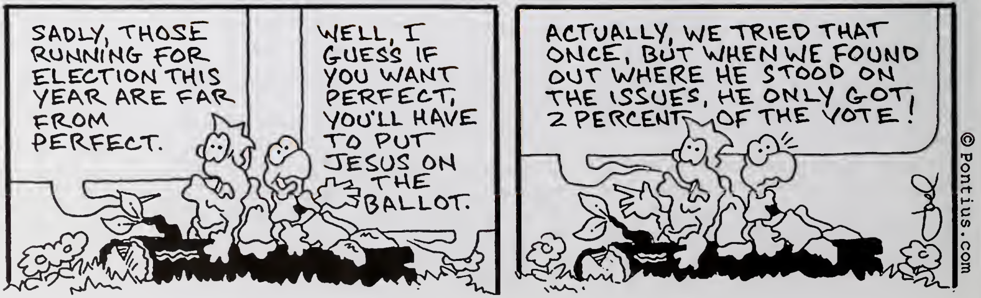
Another insight: "Curbing crime does not depend on reversing social pathologies or alleviating social grievances; it depends on erecting small, annoying barriers to entry."

Gopnik concludes: "Since prison plays at best a small role in stopping even violent crime, very few people, rich or poor, should be in prison for a nonviolent crime."

Take time to read the entire article. This huge problem in our country needs radical reform.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


SADLY, THOSE RUNNING FOR ELECTION THIS YEAR ARE FAR FROM PERFECT.
WELL, I GUESS IF YOU WANT PERFECT, YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT JESUS ON THE BALLOT.
ACTUALLY, WE TRIED THAT ONCE, BUT WHEN WE FOUND OUT WHERE HE STOOD ON THE ISSUES, HE ONLY GOT 2 PERCENT OF THE VOTE!
© Pontius.com

> “The normalization of prison rape … will surely strike our descendants as chillingly sadistic, incomprehensible on the part of people who thought themselves civilized.”—Adam Gopnik in *The New Yorker*

Eat your broccoli with spices to fight cancer

A new study from the University of Illinois shows that broccoli's cancer-fighting power can be enhanced by pairing the vegetable with spicy foods such as mustard, horseradish, watercress, arugula or wasabi. These peppery additions, the scientists report, contain myrosinase, an enzyme that is necessary to form sulforaphane, broccoli's main cancer preventative. Myrosinase also ensures that broccoli's cancer-fighting nutrients are absorbed in the upper part of the digestive system so we can reap their maximum health benefits.—*Spirituality & Health*

Women lose 5 pounds from 15 minutes work

Researchers at the University of Waterloo and Stanford recruited 45 female undergraduates who were somewhat overweight. Each woman was weighed and then given a list of important values, such as creativity, politics, music and relationships with friends and family members. Each woman ranked the values in order of how important they were to her. Half the women were told to write for 15 minutes about her most important value. The other half, a control group, wrote about why a value far down on their list might be important to someone else. The women came back between one and four months later to be weighed again. Women who had written about an important value lost an average of 3.41 pounds, while the control group gained an average of 2.76 pounds, a pattern of weight gain typical for undergraduates. Thus the brief focus on values apparently saved the women more than five pounds.—*Spirituality & Health*

Proportion of black farms in the United States in 1920: **1 in 7**
In 1982: **1 in 67**
Today: **less than 1 in 100**—*The Populist*

Percentage of all new marriages in the United States in 2010 between partners of different races or ethnicities: **15**—*Time*

Canadian imams issue fatwa against honor killings

Muslim clerics in Canada have issued a fatwa against so-called “honor killings” a week after three members of an Afghan family in Montreal were convicted of the murders of four relatives. The religious decree—only the third of its kind in Canada—also prohibits domestic violence and hatred of women. It was issued on Feb. 4, on the eve of Mawlid an-Nabi, the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.—*Religion News Service*

Little change from church attendance

Almost half of churchgoing Americans say their life has not changed a bit due to their time in the pews, a new survey shows. The Barna Group, an evangelical company based in California, found that 46 percent reported no change; about a quarter of Americans said their life was greatly affected by church attendance and another quarter said it was somewhat influential.—*Religion News Service*

Numbers to ponder

- Estimated average student debt of 2011 college graduates: **$27,200**
- Percentage of 2011 college graduates moving back into their parents' house: **85**
- Pounds of leaves that end up bagged in landfills each year: **8 million**
- Percentage of all necessary nutrients trees can glean from decomposing leaves: **50-80**
- Percentage by which the value of the minimum wage has increased since 1990: **21**
- Percentage by which the cost of living has increased since 1990: **67**—*Yes! Magazine*

The disappearing middle

Economist Richard Wolff says that both rich and poor Americans tend to think of themselves as middle class, but the middle class has nearly disappeared. The businesses that had success catering to the middle class in the past—Sears, for example—are having difficulty today. Upscale boutiques and high-end department stores at the other end are doing well.—*Christian Century*

U.S. surgery costs higher

Average cost of bypass surgery
- **in Britain: $13,998**
- **in Canada: $22,212**
- **in France: $16,325**
- **in Germany: $27,237**
- **in the United States: $59,770**

Average cost of cataract surgery
- **in Britain: $1,299**
- **in Canada: $927**
- **in France: $3,352**
- **in Germany: not available**
- **in the United States: $14,764**

—New York Times

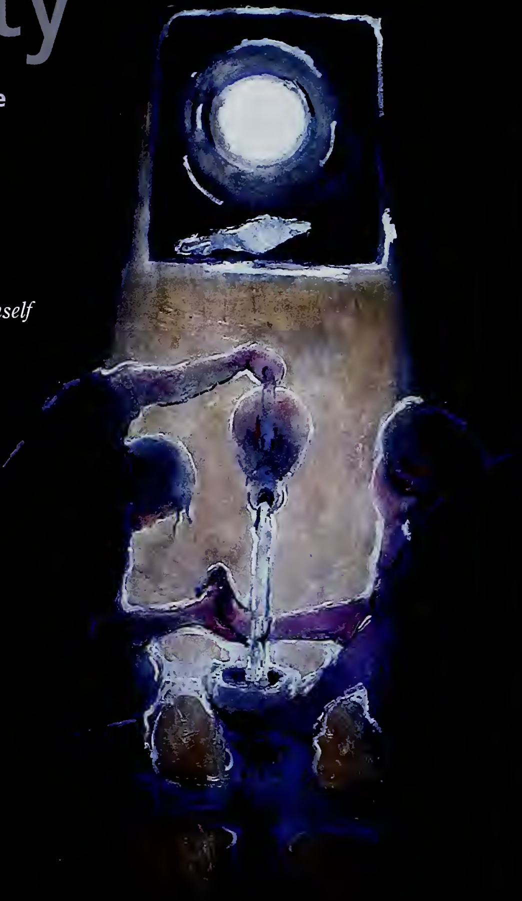
a holy hybridity

Reflections on a footwashing service

by Isaac S. Villegas

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.—2 Corinthians 5:18a

We pulled into the parking lot of a 100-year-old black Baptist church in Durham, N.C., St. John's Missionary Baptist Church. We were there for our Holy Thursday footwashing service. Since our Mennonite congregation doesn't have its own building, we are always dependent on the hospitality of others.



I found a seat in the sanctuary next to some friends. As I looked around, I noticed that members of St. John's, our hosts for the evening, had joined us for worship. After singing a few songs and reading a couple of Bible passages, we made our way to the footwashing basin. When my turn came, I washed the feet of the person in front of me, Doug, a member of our Mennonite fellowship. Then I sat down so the person behind me could wash my feet. It was deacon Marlow, a member of St. John's Church.

I didn't want him to wash my feet. It just didn't seem right to me for an older black man to be bowed so low, at my feet, washing them, like a servant, like a slave. As he bent to the ground, I felt like I should say something, perhaps confess to him that this holy moment reminded me of the way people in North Carolina enslaved black bodies—the way his people were used, bought and sold, subjugated, oppressed, humiliated and abused; the way his black skin conjured for me the spirits of his ancestors. Listen, I wanted to say, your great-grandmother and great-grandfather's blood is crying out from the ground beneath us (Genesis 4:10). With such a history, he should not take the form of a slave, not at my feet; I should wash his feet, all of us should wash his feet, as penance, as a modest gesture of atonement.

As he knelt before me, with a towel in his hand, bowed low, close to the ground, ground softened with the tears and sweat of his ancestors—as this black man prepared to wash my feet, I wanted to tell him about what was going on in our neighborhoods, stories I'm sure he already knew: that his kind and my kind, my people and his people, African Americans and Hispanics, aren't getting along too well these days; that there's black and brown tension in our cities, in our country—a struggle against one another to grab hold of a place in the so-called American dream, a battle not to be last, not to be at the bottom, to push the other down while we make our way up one more rung on the ladder of economic success, of cultural power, of political influence, of social respectability.

I wanted to tell him what a little black girl told me. We were working together in a community garden, and she told me that her mom had warned her to beware of lice when she was playing with the other kids. As we dug around in the dirt, I reassured the girl that she would be OK, but I asked her if she knew what to watch out for. I asked her how we would know if lice were around so I could make sure we didn't get any on us. She told me that we would be fine, just so long as we stayed away from the Mexicans, because they carry the lice on their bodies, dirty bodies, brown bodies like mine.

I wanted to warn deacon Marlow about the lice, about how some people, even innocent little children, think my brown flesh is dirty, a contaminant to the social body, a disease spreading throughout North America. I wanted to tell him that maybe he should wear gloves as he took my dirty, brown feet into his black hands.

But I didn't say anything. I just sat there, submissive, receptive, letting him take me, my feet, into him, his hands—a moment of union, our union in the body of Christ. With the water and with his hands came the gentle caress of Christ's love, God's grace made flesh. We were being drawn into the body of Christ with a touch of grace. If anyone is in Christ, behold, there is a new creation, says the apostle Paul, everything old has passed away; everything has become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

As he bent to the ground, I felt like I should say something, perhaps confess to him that this holy moment reminded me of the way people in North Carolina enslaved black bodies.

New creation: happening in our midst, in the shell of the old. New creation: a power that breaks through the barriers of our society, a force of love that can empower us to transgress the concrete walls of racist nationalism. New creation: building a bridge across cultures, breaching political borders, crisscrossing congregations and traditions. New creation: making a space within us for migration, for our differences to mingle, for me to become part of you, and you to become part of me—a space for holy miscegenation, for a holy mestizaje. New creation: where people can share the wounds of the past, where if one member suffers, all suffer together with her (1 Corinthians 12:26), a place where wounds can bring life, Christ's life, new life that flows from the wounds in his hands and his feet.

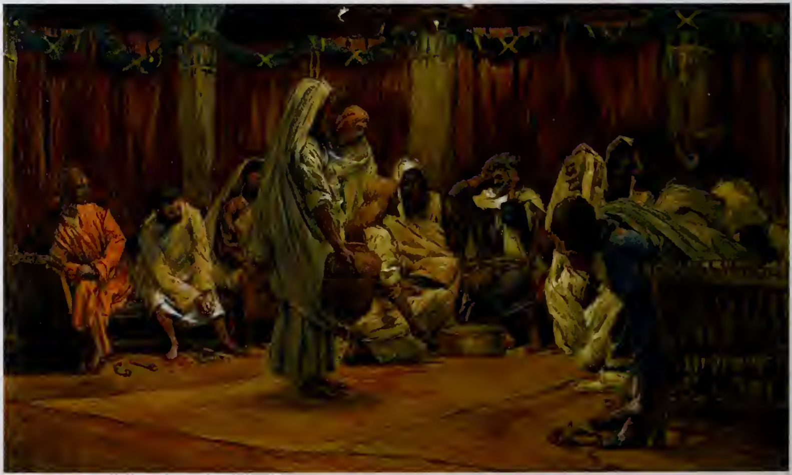
> We were being made holy, with the washing of water and the word, becoming the splendor of God, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish.

His hands and my feet—still bowed low, with his back bent before me, he began to dry each of my feet with a towel. After he finished washing my feet, I stood up from my seat, and we embraced. There, in the inner sanctuary of St. John's Baptist Church, as some sang songs from their pews and others continued to wash and be washed, we were being made holy, with the washing of water and the word, becoming the splendor of God, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:26-27)—the joining of flesh in the mongrel body of Christ, the re-formation of our bodies in the womb of God, the church, where God is giving birth to a new humanity, a new creation.

With the water, with the towel, with his hands, deacon Marlow nourished and cared for my body, as if it were his own, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of the same body, his body, his flesh and bones on earth (Ephesians 5:29-30).

There, at church, there was a holy union, communion with God, and love was made flesh, grace took the form of a humble body. At my feet and in my arms, Christ had become black.

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church. This is adapted from the sermon he preached on July 6, 2011, at the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Pittsburgh.

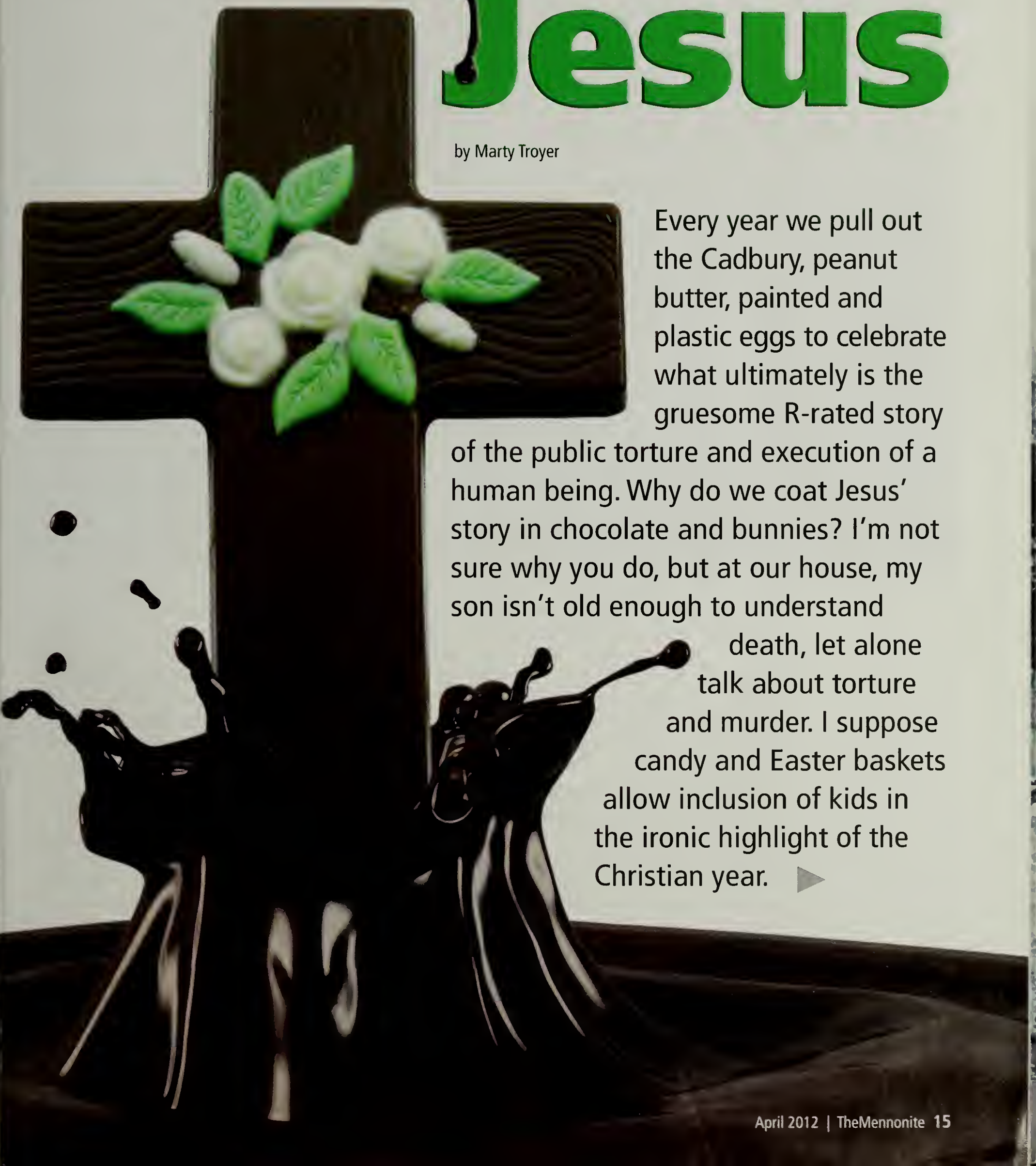


The Washing of the Feet by James Tissot (1836-1902), Copyright © 2012 the Brooklyn Museum

How what Jesus' believed led to his actions during Holy Week

Chocolate-covered Jesus

by Marty Troyer



Every year we pull out the Cadbury, peanut butter, painted and plastic eggs to celebrate what ultimately is the gruesome R-rated story of the public torture and execution of a human being. Why do we coat Jesus' story in chocolate and bunnies? I'm not sure why you do, but at our house, my son isn't old enough to understand death, let alone talk about torture and murder. I suppose candy and Easter baskets allow inclusion of kids in the ironic highlight of the Christian year. ▶

Siphoning attention to the Easter bunny is not the only way we escape Jesus during Holy Week. We adults are much more sophisticated. We elude Jesus' humanity via the warm glow of theology itself. Here's what I mean. Orthodox Christianity says that Jesus is 100 percent human and 100 percent divine, yet our telling of Easter neglects the human aspects of Holy Week and jumps to a theological interpretation (God is love, Jesus had to die, substitutionary atonement) without looking at the human, historical realities the Gospels themselves focus on. If Jesus' humanity is fact, why skip so readily from the cradle to the grave?

> My love for God grows exponentially more when thinking about what Jesus believed to live the life he lived during Holy Week, than it does to ask what I'm supposed to believe about Jesus.

Whether by a chocolate- or a theology-covered Jesus, skipping the narrative account derails an important opportunity to form faith. The narrative is filled with demonstrations, courage, tears, injustice, backstabbing, class contempt, militarism and mob spirit.

How did Jesus fight the noise and remain self-differentiated enough to stay faithful to God? What would the man Jesus have had to believe in order to endure the journey to the cross? My love for God grows exponentially more when thinking about what Jesus believed to live the life he lived during Holy Week, than it does to ask what I'm supposed to believe about Jesus. Here are my three opening thoughts on what Jesus believed and what I'm committing myself to again this Holy Week.

Something has gone terribly wrong.

At the height of Jesus' popularity, in the midst of raging throngs of supporters, Jesus stops to weep over Jerusalem. His lament? That we don't know what makes peace. His harshest criticism is never for the outsider or the nonbeliever. Instead, he saves his strictest action for folks just like me. Indeed, Ched Myers in his book *Binding the Strong Man* suggests that all the events of Holy Week are an unfolding indictment against the religious leadership of Jesus' day. Demonstrating against the temple, parables directed at the leaders, acknowledgement that their unjust practices negatively affect the poor, promises that the corrupt temple system will be "thrown into the sea" all reveal Jesus' sadness over a world gone wrong. His friends betray him, his friends try to protect him with violence, his friends utterly abandon him. But ultimately, nothing unmasks the terribleness of our world like Jesus' ruthless execution before the watching world. Something has gone terribly wrong indeed.

But had Jesus only believed this, he would have been jaded, bitter and angry. He wasn't. He also believed …

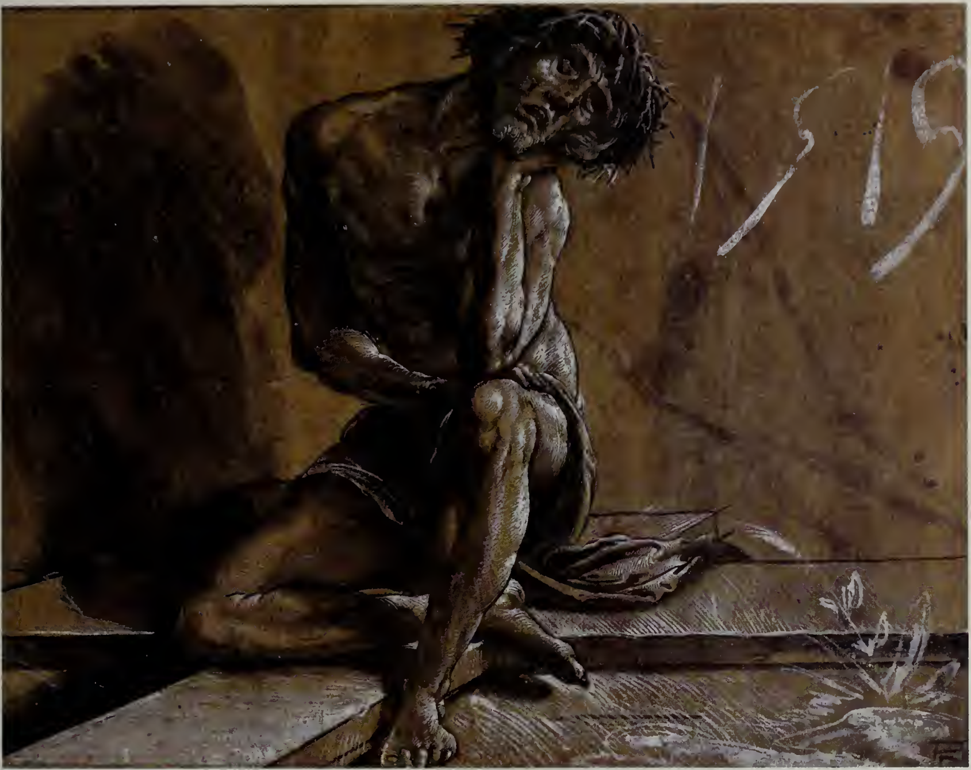
The kingdom of God is the real solution to the world's greatest needs.

Rooted in the prayers of a mother who taught him God "has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly," Jesus washed his disciples' feet, revealing true service and mutuality to be more transformative than absolute power. Rooted in an ancient tradition of swords beaten into plowshares and lambs lying with wolves, Jesus rejects the viable choice of violence when his accusers prowl and instead embraces nonviolence: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). Rooted in his experience as a refugee and as a poor, homeless man, Jesus rejects the individualization of faith and embraces God's love as being for the whole world, not just believers like him, then proves it by forgiving his executioners and embracing his fellow death-row prisoners. Rooted in direct experience of the love of God for himself, Jesus commits to nonviolence as the greatest demonstration of the sovereignty of God the world has ever seen. Jesus' actions in Holy Week show me he's interested in more than just saving souls. He genuinely believes at the core of his being that God's plan for the world (his "kingdom") is the best way to live.

But Jesus didn't wait for God's magic wand, Armageddon or the rapture to bring such an epiphany. No, Jesus also believed …

God invites us to be part of the solution.

Holy Week kicks off on Palm Sunday with a mass demonstration against the competing imperial gospel, worthy of civil rights march fame. Courageous, risky, committed action on Jesus' part finds him riding a donkey into Jerusalem, declaring himself (again) king and Lord. Scholars call this ride the "Anti-triumphal Entry," a parody, a comedy of what is happening on the other side of town, where imperial forces descend on Jerusalem to protect it during Passover. 'There is



Christ at Rest by Hans Holbein the Younger, ca. 1497–1543. www.commons.wikimedia.org

a new sheriff in town,' Jesus seems to be saying. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. … The kingdom of God is among you. … My yoke is easy and my burden is light. … Pick up your cross and follow me." Love, acceptance, justice, kindness, humility, nonviolence, mutuality: these are the marks of participation with God in bringing the kingdom to earth.

Astonishingly, we're told by a reputable source, we are to "have the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). We are to work, because God is at work in us.

Helen Keller says it this way: "I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do something I can do." This was precisely the attitude in 1960 Houston, when 14 black students from Texas State University sat down at an all-white lunch counter at Weingarten's supermarket. While they were not served on that auspicious day in early March due to religiously accepted racism, Houston's civil rights movement kicked off and quietly and nonviolently led to the unraveling of Jim Crow in Houston.

Chocolate-covered Jesus

Now don't get me wrong, I love chocolate and am a sucker for theology. But I have a hunch that if more of us believed what Jesus believed, Houston and other cities would be a lot closer to heaven than they are today.

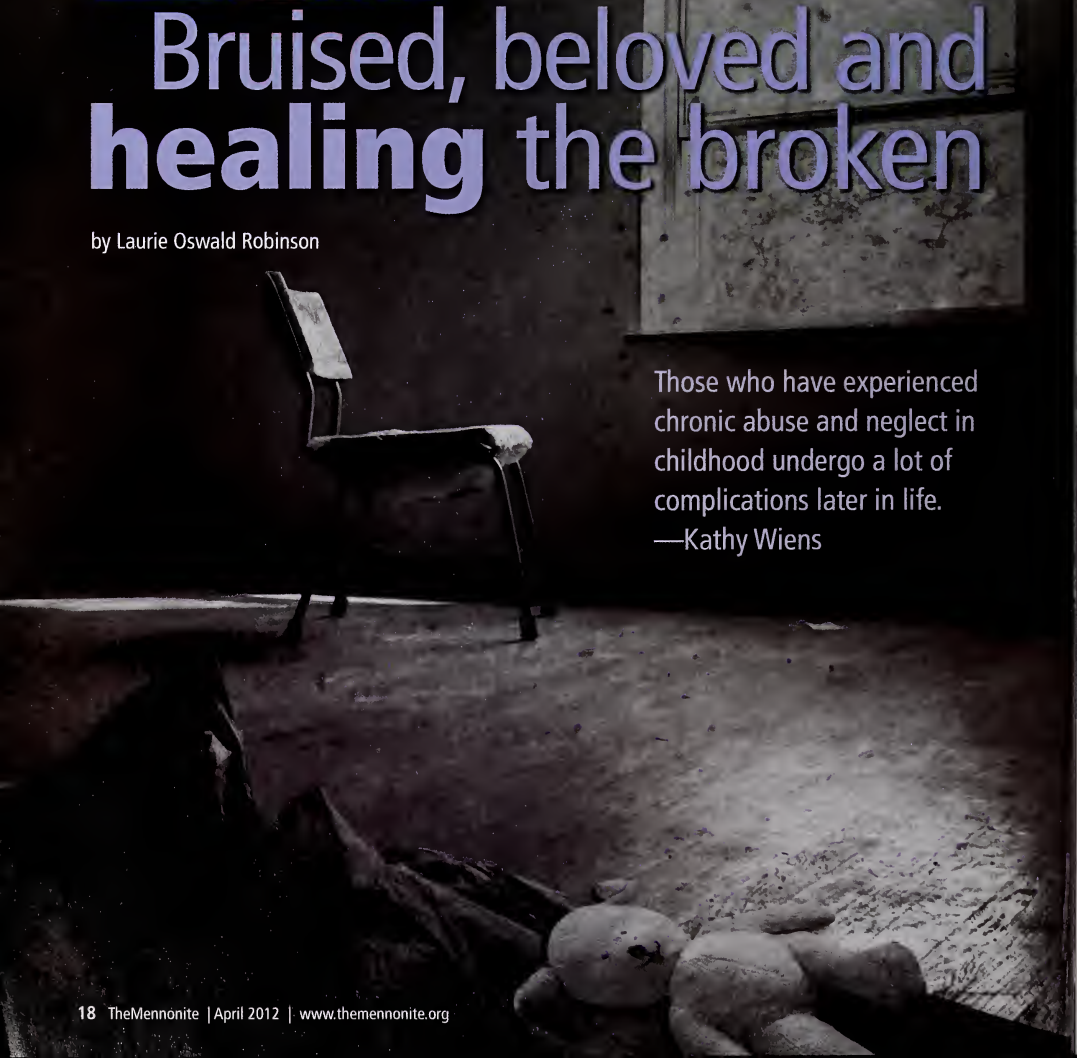
What do you think? What do you believe this Holy Week? What do you think Jesus believed in the inaugural Holy Week? Whatever you believe, I hope your faith is formed to be more and more like Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Marty Troyer is pastor of Houston Mennonite Church. This was published on his blog in 2011: http://blog.chron.com/thepeacepastor/2011/04/chocolate-covered-jesus/.

Kathy Wiens Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Bruised, beloved and **healing** the broken

by Laurie Oswald Robinson



Those who have experienced chronic abuse and neglect in childhood undergo a lot of complications later in life. —Kathy Wiens

Kathy Wiens at age 10.
Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

When Kathy Wiens was taken from an abusive and neglectful home at age 10 and placed in an adoptive Mennonite family in Milford, Neb., healing from the trauma did not happen magically. It took the love and affirmation of her new parents, Erma and Floyd Burkey, and her church family at Bellwood Mennonite Church to show Wiens that it was safe to trust again.

Kathy Wiens extends the healing hand of Jesus to children and adults.

As the stable and nurturing home and church life replaced the bars, bruises, abandonment and sexual abuse of her former life, Wiens learned she was a child worthy of safe and consistent care. Most importantly, she discovered she was a valued and beloved child of God.

"My adoptive parents were older and were part of a social group of adults who no longer had small children," says Wiens of Newton, Kan. "So they had time to give me positive attention. … They talked to me and listened to me and praised me a lot, even for little things.

"And even though I was different from the other kids raised in the rural, middle-class background, I felt accepted and safe in Sunday school and the girls' group. … Sunday was my favorite day of the week. I was often the last person to leave the church."

Replacing the hurt with hope

This safe embrace from the body of Christ shaped Wiens' passion as an adult to transform her childhood hurt into hope for others. Today, Wiens, a member of First Mennonite Church in Newton, extends the healing hands of Jesus to children and to the adults who care for them through her ministry, Welcome the Children.

She offers workshops for parents, pastors, congregations and other groups on childhood development and faith formation and blog posts at welcomingchildren.blogspot.com.

The ministry integrates decades of her own healing journey with her educational and professional background. After she graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., she married Tim Wiens. The couple settled in Newton, where Tim began to practice medicine, and they raised two daughters, Terra and Ruth.

She was a stay-at-home mother, then worked outside the home in jobs that included providing in-services for parents through Kansas Children's Service League, directing and teaching at Christian day care centers and preschools, working for the Wichita (Kan.) Public Schools in programs for low-income children and teaching early childhood development at Hutchinson Community College.

She earned her master's degree in elementary education from Wichita (Kan.) State University and is pursuing her master's degree in mental health counseling at Emporia (Kan.) State University.

Mediating Christ's love for lingering effects of abuse

These experiences have ignited one of the driving forces behind her ministry—to educate the church about the lingering effects of trauma and proclaim that many people sitting in the church

Wiens has joined ranks with others in the Mennonite church and beyond to tell the truth in love—that abuse happens and that it also happens in the church.

pews often suffer from it quietly and secretly.

"Repeated abuse and trauma changes the way the brain develops and creates pathways in your brain that cause psychological pain and suffering in your life," she says. "Those who have experienced chronic abuse and neglect in childhood undergo a lot of complications later in life.

"Those complications can include terrifying flashbacks and triggers that cause people to fear they will be hurt again like in the past, even though in the present they are not in the same kind of danger."

Healing from trauma is often a long and multilayered journey that must integrate spiritual, emotional and psychological understandings with practical application and faith formation, she says.

"It is important for people to realize what abuse does to a person's soul," Wiens says. "As depicted in Psalm 139, God has a plan for each life. Sexual and other kinds of abuse takes that plan and rips it up and throws it on the floor.

"Because I was brought into a loving environment at a young age, I was fortunate enough to learn that God and others would help me pick up those pieces and put them back together again. … But I am still working at it, because it takes a lifetime."

Wiens compares the loving arms of wholesome families and church families with layers of insulation that help protect a child against the cold and harm of the world.

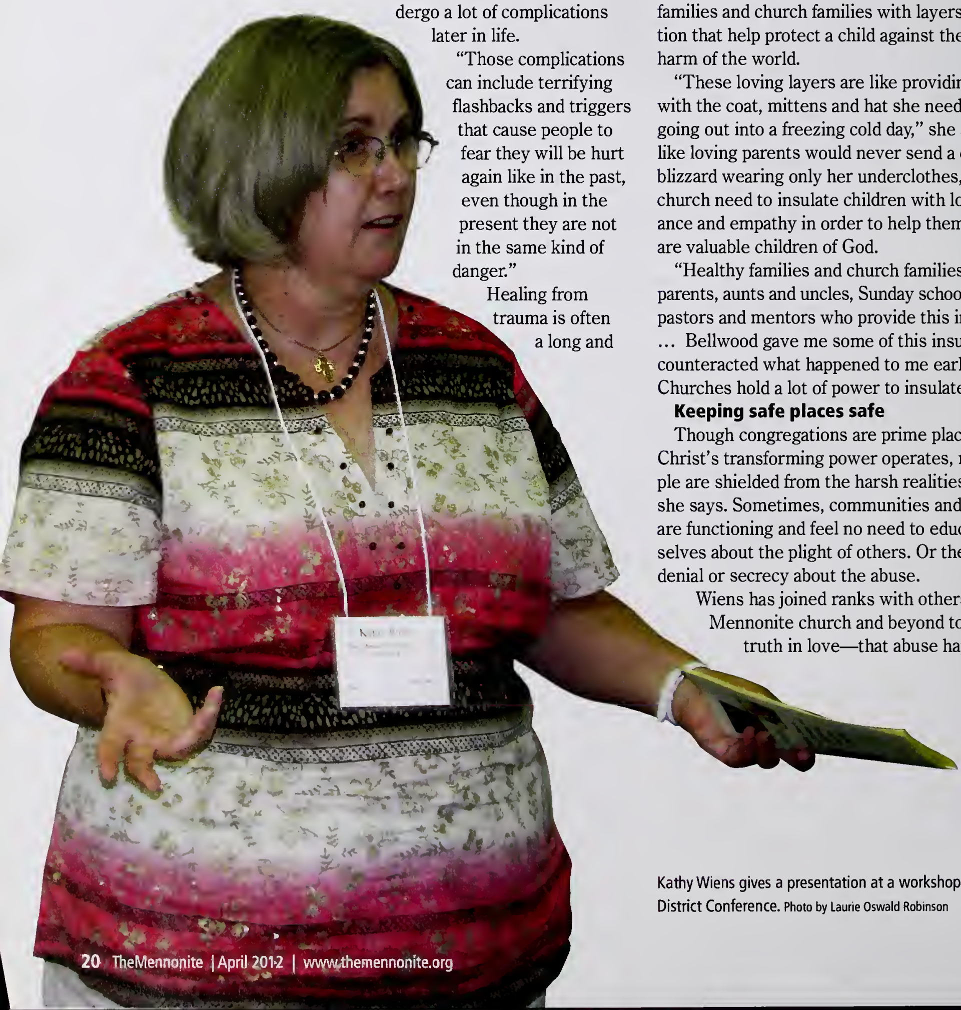
"These loving layers are like providing a child with the coat, mittens and hat she needs when going out into a freezing cold day," she says. "Just like loving parents would never send a child into a blizzard wearing only her underclothes, we in the church need to insulate children with love, acceptance and empathy in order to help them see they are valuable children of God.

"Healthy families and church families provide parents, aunts and uncles, Sunday school teachers, pastors and mentors who provide this insulation. … Bellwood gave me some of this insulation and counteracted what happened to me earlier. … Churches hold a lot of power to insulate."

Keeping safe places safe

Though congregations are prime places where Christ's transforming power operates, many people are shielded from the harsh realities of abuse, she says. Sometimes, communities and families are functioning and feel no need to educate themselves about the plight of others. Or they are in denial or secrecy about the abuse.

Wiens has joined ranks with others in the Mennonite church and beyond to tell the truth in love—that abuse happens and



Kathy Wiens gives a presentation at a workshop at Western District Conference. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson that it also happens in the church. They are providing a variety of resources and tools to help families and congregations nurture children in Christlike ways.

For example, five years ago, Marlene Bogard, minister of Christian formation and library director for Western District Conference (WDC). began to provide Safe Sanctuaries training for congregations. Wiens helps implement this program, which strives to prevent child abuse, at her congregation, First Mennonite.

"The guidelines and protocols of the Safe Sanctuaries [program] help us minimize situations where a child is left alone with an adult, to make sure all the classroom doors have windows and that monitors check in on the classes periodically on Sunday mornings," Wiens says.

Striking the balance between providing safety for children and trust of those who care for them can be tricky, because as trusting, caring adults in a faith community it is difficult to believe the alarming statistics regarding child abuse pertain to Christian communities, Wiens says.

The Safe Sanctuaries training is also important because those working with children need to see how churches can be a target for sexual predators.

"This can happen because congregations value nurturing and loving relationships," she says. "And this nurturing atmosphere can help perpetrators in grooming victims through kindness and care."

A year ago, the Catholic Diocese of Omaha, Neb., provided a training, attended by Wiens, on its curriculum for children, Circle of Grace. It empowers children to recognize and own their God-given dignity and their right to set boundaries against unwanted behaviors.

"Circle of Grace teaches that God created us, and the circle of God's presence is all around us," Wiens says. "That circle protects us and gives us dignity. And each of us may decide who we let into that circle."

Wiens also recommends that congregations study *Let the Children Come* (Herald Press) by Jeanette Harder, associate professor at the University of Nebraska in Omaha School of Social Work. She is a founder of Dove's Nest, a churchwide ministry tackling abuse and its prevention.

The book helps Christians learn about their role in ending child abuse and neglect, and each chapter contains real-life stories, discussion questions and action items. The appendix includes prayers, readings and exercises for use in adult education.

"All these varied resources teach us that childhood has value in and of itself, rather than simply being a holding tank before adulthood," Wiens says. "They help us shed secular attitudes about children, which often promote the idea that children are possessions to be manipulated rather than persons to be nurtured.

"Many of our discipline techniques are formed by this unchallenged premise. We must learn to use discipline from the biblical view that a challenging and troubled child is a lost sheep that Jesus goes to find; not so he can punish but so that he can heal and hold, guide and teach."

> We are called to love and treasure who God loves and treasures, because what we value we do not abuse.—Kathy Wiens

Replacing harming hands with healing touch

Wiens prays that adults across the church help children be touched and changed by the hands of Jesus rather than harmed and wounded by the hands of abandonment and abuse. She is working on a manuscript of her childhood memoirs, *Dumps, Bars and Other Childhood Hangouts*.

When it is published, she hopes it will inspire adults to realize that all children—and especially foster children—are some of the most powerless ones in our society. They are the ones Jesus longs to empower through the loving ministry and witness of the church.

"Through this ministry and my writings I hope to help the body of Christ fully embrace the story of Jesus in the Gospels, to let the children come," she says.

"All children are God's children first. And that calls us to unravel from our busyness to spend time with them and develop relationships of trust. We are called to love and treasure who God loves and treasures, because what we value we do not abuse."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a freelance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

Jesus comes to us over and over.

Now-millennialism

by Duane Hershberger

One weekend in early June 1967, my family traveled from Virginia to the small town of Roxbury, Pa., for a weekend of church meetings on the end times. A crowd of kindred spirits gathered for several days of back-to-back, hour-long sermons from the books of Revelation or Daniel about how the world would end with Jesus coming through the clouds. We'd recognize the end times when the signs were right. There'd be a restored Jewish state, a rebuilt temple, nations waging war on Israel, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, abounding sin and clouds. There had to be clouds in the sky for Jesus to burst through.

Photo illustration by Tim Kauffman, 2012 TM photo contest entry

This year their timing was dead on. On the first Monday of June 1967, Israel started a war with Egypt, Jordan and Syria that lasted six days. The people of God against the forces of evil. The end times couldn't be far off: horses with blood up to their bridles, Armageddon and Jesus riding through the clouds. A kid who dreamed in color had lots to dream about with all those pictures in his head. The end-times meetings began on a Friday, Day Five of the war.

Any preacher who ignores mystery and stands solidly on certainty could let fly with both barrels that week. And let fly with both barrels they did. The nervous crowd gathered in the wooden chairs to sing four-part harmony while girding up for sermon number one. The preacher was on a roll.

"I don't expect Monday to arrive before Jesus comes back to claim his own," thundered end-times preacher number one as Day Five of the Six-Day war ended on Friday night. Jesus was coming back within two days.

I was 9 years old. Whoa.

I wanted the world to go on and see what grown-up life was like. I wanted to read a lot of books. I wanted to have my own home and a family. I wanted to go to major league ball games. I wanted to get a driver's license, get a car and fill it up with gas myself. I wanted to see what it was like to live in a city. I wanted to see if I could paint the pictures that glowed in my head. I wanted time to figure out life's mysteries.

Saturday passed and Sunday came. This was it. Jesus didn't come on Saturday, so maybe if we made it through one more day we'd be free from the weekend's special worry. We could go back to the normal worry that Jesus would come through the clouds, even without a war to spark it off. Maybe the skies would be completely clear all Sunday with no clouds for Jesus to come through. It was either the last day or it wasn't. More sermons, more four-part harmony, more sky watching.

Night passed and Monday came. Hurray. We made it. But wait, you weren't supposed to be happy about that. You were supposed to be eager for the clouds to open and Jesus to come riding through. I was not eager for that at all. But if you weren't eager, then something must be wrong. It probably meant you weren't ready. And since I preferred to grow up rather than see Jesus come through the clouds, I wasn't ready. Don't tell anyone. But on Monday, I was a happy 9-year-old kid.

In my small world, grownups talked about Jesus' second coming in Sunday school classes, Bible

You were supposed to be eager for the clouds to open and Jesus to come riding through. I was not eager for that at all.

studies and over Sunday lunch. They wrote about it in church papers in long articles filled with Scripture. They had conflicting beliefs about how it would happen. Jesus would come through the clouds, gather us up for a 1,000-year reign or we'd all go straight to heaven, depending on the theory. The people left behind would all go straight to hell or have another chance to be saved, depending on the theory. One of these theories was called premillennialism, and the other was amillennialism. In my community, people took these theories so seriously that sometimes friendships were broken over them. Some people said it was not important and, tongue in cheek, came up with "panmillennialism," saying it would all pan out in the end.

It's time for a new word: now-millennialism. Jesus came back. He came back millions and billions of times. He came back yesterday, last night and this morning. We probably missed it.

In the Bible, I read in Isaiah and other prophets about how Jesus would come as king or as a servant, depending on the Scripture. He would be a prince or a bruised reed, depending on the Scripture. He would hold a scepter or shepherd's staff, depending on the Scripture.

Jesus' first incarnation was when people thought they needed a king. So when he arrived, people didn't expect him to be born to a carpenter's family, live as a homeless guy off other people's generosity and then get himself killed. That's just not kinglike. The crowd missed it when Jesus came the first time.

I read in John where Jesus is the light that lights up everyone who comes into the world. I read where Jesus told us to be salt and light in this world. I read where Jesus said he was going away, but "surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age" (Matthew 18:20). I read where Jesus said when we bring a cup of cold water to a thirsty person, when we clothe a poor person and when we feed a hungry person, we minister to Jesus himself.

He came back in the people who clean our streets, take care of our parents, pick up our garbage and sell us hamburgers. He came back in the poor Guatemalan dad trying to get across the border to find work and feed his family in Chimaltenango. He came back in the high school kid confused by the complexities of sexuality and rejection. He came back in the young mom who was just told she has terminal cervical cancer. He came back in the guy who's been looking for work so long he's completely discouraged. Jesus came back. He's waiting for you to notice.

Jesus came back. He's waiting for you to notice.

Today, a lot of people want a king again. Many Christians want special Christians to sit on thrones. Many Christians want special Christians to sit in judges' seats. Many Christians want special Christians to be governors and mayors and on the school board. Some Christians want a special Christian, maybe Jesus himself to ride through the clouds on Air Force One. If that's what people want, then that's what they look for.

Perhaps someday Jesus will have a grand entrance as a king riding a horse through the clouds. It would be a grand surprise. But Jesus never showed enthusiasm to sit on a throne. He washes feet. He hangs out with outcasts. He's in the people uncomfortable at the thought of attending your church.

He dines with sinners. He disdains wealth and political power. Jesus won't mind if he finds us being salt and light instead of arguing about a millennialism theory if he comes through the clouds on a horse.

The light of Jesus lights me up. It lights you up. It lights up the guy down the street who may not know it yet. If I miss Jesus in those places, I'll miss his second coming. Jesus doesn't need another six-day war or blood up to the horses' bridles, Armageddon or even clouds to burst through. Maybe he's already in view and needs shelter. Or a cup of water. Or maybe he's in an entire village on another continent that needs a clean water source so the kids don't get sick and die. Or he's in someone who needs hospitality. Or a kind word. Miss those opportunities and maybe we're missing Jesus' second coming because we're too busy checking the clouds. Too much time dickering about how it will happen dilutes the urgency of Christ with us in the here and now.

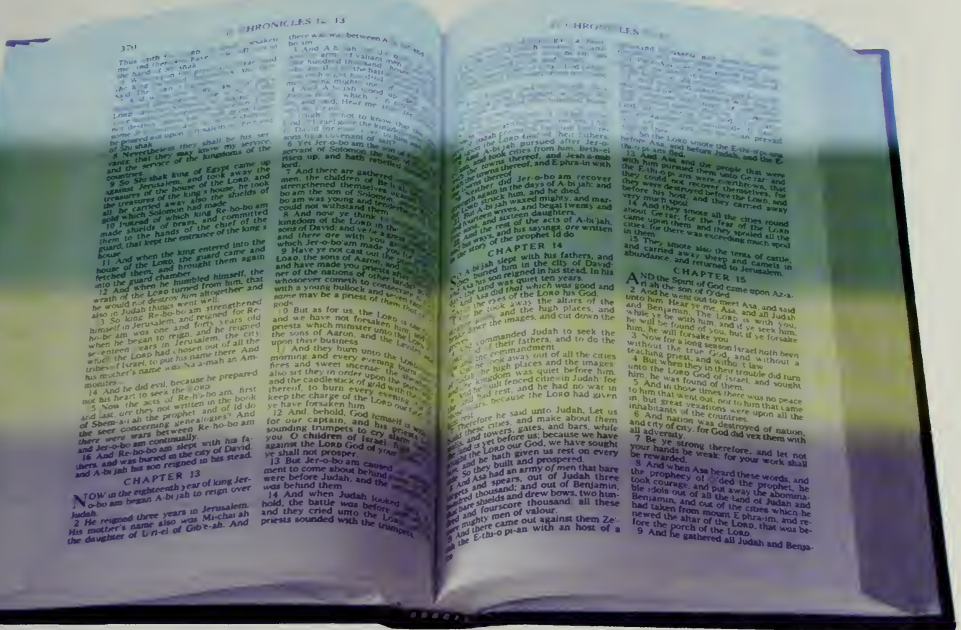
There is so much to do. As long as we live in a world that cries for people to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God, we won't have much down time to argue about the millennialism thing. Besides, it seems odd to debate Jesus' second coming with someone who already has Jesus in them. Wise believers live as though he's already come back in the lives of the broken, the poor, the sick and outcast. They joyfully minister with their time, talents and treasure. Let other people watch the clouds. It's the now-millennialism era. Jesus isn't waiting to return. He's here.

Duane Hershberger works with Habitat for Humanity and has helped pastor several Mennonite churches. He worships at Germantown Mennonite Church in Philadelphia.

A different way to study the Bible

Color-coded Bible study

by Ruth O'Neil



Have you been looking for something different to do for your Bible study?

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I was. Many of the devotions I was doing were shallow, and I didn't feel I was learning much or growing spiritually. Then a friend introduced me to a color-coded Bible study. This kind of studying is good to use by yourself and can be easily adapted for a group

This study makes you read the Scripture passage several times, each time looking for something else and marking it accordingly. Only in the end do you look at what scholars have to say in commentaries. You will be surprised at how much you can glean from God's Word when you study this way.

The first thing you need to do is get some colored pencils, a Bible you don't mind coloring in and a notebook to record all your thoughts. Something else I decided to do along the way was to get a highlighter, particularly one that can be seen through easily, to mark the passages of Scripture I knew as a song. It is interesting to see how many of the songs we sing today come straight from the Bible. Also, a Bible atlas is helpful to use.

When you do this study for the first time it is good to use a smaller book of the Bible. Ecclesiastes or Ephesians are excellent choices. There is so much to be learned in both those books. If it is a short book and if time allows, you can read through all of it each time you are instructed to use a new color. Otherwise, reading one chapter at a time is best for longer books of the Bible.

This study is easily split into sections. Just do as many colors as you have time for or plan on doing one or two colors a day for your personal devotions. Once you get started, though, it is hard to stop reading and coloring.

To begin the study, read through the entire book. Don't stop to color; don't stop to look up any references that are mentioned in the sidebars; don't stop to jot down anything that comes to mind. Just read.

After you have read through the book completely, that is when you pick up your first colored pencil. It is blue. As you read, underline all the names that are mentioned. These can be proper names such as John and Paul or positional names such as servant, wife and sister. Any noun that can answer the question who should be marked in blue. The exception to this is any reference to God. We'll mark that later in a different color.

Green is your next color. Reread the chapter, this time underline all the places, for example, Rome, house, garden or heaven. Anything that gives a location should be marked in green.

Read the chapter again and use your yellow pencil to mark all the words or phrases that indicate time. It can be early, now, later, at dawn or at night.

Now, grab the purple pencil and underline all the references to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Trinity, Christ, Savior, shepherd. This color is a little different in that not only will you underline all the names we have for God but also the attributes or character of God.

As you read for the fifth time, outline with a black square all the words or ideas that are repeated throughout the chapter. If there is more than one word or idea that is repeated, lightly fill in the squares of matching words with the same color. For example, if peace is mentioned several times, outline each occurrence of peace with black, then fill in each with orange. Salvation words may be shaded in pink. You may find that one idea is repeated in different ways, such as unity, together, one mind or in one accord.

Read it again and this time use the red-colored pencil to circle words or ideas that show contrast. For example: light/dark or righteous/wicked.

> You will be surprised at how much you can glean from God's Word when you study this way.

Now, put down the colored pencils but don't put down the Bible. Read through the chapter as if you are the one who wrote it. Who are you? Where are you? To whom are you writing?

Read it as a participant again, only this time it is as if you are the one receiving the letter. What is the message they wanted to send you?

Now you are allowed to use other passages of Scripture. All those extra references in the margins of your Bible are no longer off-limits. Get out your notebook, look up those references and write down what they add to the chapter you've been reading. Have they helped you understand some parts you didn't understand before? Have they made you think of something you had not thought of before?

Until this part of the study, which has taken up most of our time, we have studied using observation. Now we can look and see what the scholars have had to say regarding this passage of Scripture. Scholars have not only studied the languages of the Bible, but many have also visited a lot of the places mentioned in the Bible. They have learned about the culture and the way people in Bible times lived. They can add a wealth of information and knowledge to your own study of the Scriptures.

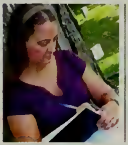
A word of warning: Don't just choose any commentators' books for study. Use authors you know to be reliable, who believe in the words of God. If you are unsure, your pastor should be able to help you.

Always read the commentaries last. Even though many authors can be reliable, it is just their interpretation. Even though the Word of God is infallible, humans are not. It may be that God is speaking to you through a certain passage. He may have some special message for you. Be open to that calling. If a certain Scripture passage holds a special meaning, you will more likely remember that as opposed to what someone else tells you.

The last thing you need to do is apply it to your life. Knowledge of the Scripture and what God commands us to do will be of no good to us if we don't use it. Obey God's commands; hold the promises he gives near your heart. God's promises are always kept.

Also share what you have learned with someone else. This is where this study is wonderful with a group. Sometimes everyone agrees on what the passage is saying; sometimes the discussion is profound.

I have found this an exceptionally enjoyable way to study the Bible. It hasn't mattered if it has been in a group of 10 or just myself. Every time God speaks to me, and I have every confidence that he will speak to you, too. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Enjoy.



Ruth O'Neil lives in Lynchburg, Va.

Reflections on ways to simplify our lives

Living with less, loving people more

by Jan Johnson

Carol decided to try an experiment. Several of her friends at work were giving up things for Lent, and she decided to join them (even though her church didn't practice Lent). To her husband's surprise, she gave up shopping. Once a week she did grocery shopping for her family but never bought anything for herself for 40 days.

When she thought about something she wanted to buy during that time, she said to God, I'll let it wait. You are enough. By the end of the 40 days, she'd forgotten about most of the things she wanted. Thinking back on her experiment, she says: "Life was so much less hectic. Being in stores messes with your mind. It convinces you that you really need things you don't need at all."

Such experiments with simplicity (actually, frugality) are about learning to be content with whatever you have. They help us redefine the good life as "the life that is truly life." They teach us to live with less rather than satisfying every desire for more. We learn to ask ourselves, What can I get rid of? rather than, What do I want to buy? As a result, when we have a little more, we don't think of how we can spend it but how we can use it to help others: a flat-screen TV or helping our friends with their mortgage payment?

Practicing frugality means making intentional choices to keep or let go of possessions we already own (clutter?) and what we acquire.

AMBS

inside this issue

2 Sharing a distinctly Christian peace witness
Alumni News
3 A learning community with an Anabaptist vision
Your gifts at work
4 President's Window

Spring 2012
Volume 22 Issue 2

AMBS window

Valuing the tradition and reshaping Anabaptism

Jesus-centered discipleship. Community. Mutuality. Loving enemies. Justice. Simplicity.

In the Mennonite church, we may take these traditional marks of Anabaptism for granted. But they are finding fresh and radical expressions among a growing number of believers. Discipleship communities, embodying these values in a variety of ways, are already part of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, and emerging communities are seeking links to the two denominations.

Joanna Shenk, associate for interchurch relations for Mennonite Church USA, has been building relationships with these groups over the last two years. *Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship* (Herald Press, 2011), which she edited, gives voice to representatives of 19 of these communities.

Anton Flores-Maisonet of Alterna, a community based in Georgia that comprises U.S. citizens and undocumentable recent immigrants, writes, "Unaware of Mennonite core values, I had forming within me a growing desire to have Christ as the center of my faith, community as the center of my life, and reconciliation as the center of my work."

Jamie Arpin-Ricci of Little Flowers Community in Winnipeg, Man., says, "We have discovered a notable increase of interest in Anabaptism among people with no cultural heritage in the tradition. … They have found great resonance and wisdom borne in the Anabaptist tradition."

Joanna, a 2009 graduate of AMBS with a Master of Arts: Theological Studies degree, writes, "I meet many people who are deeply committed to the way of Jesus and to Anabaptist values of community, peacemaking, simplicity and discomfort with the status quo. … They embody what the future of the church can look like and, indeed, what it already looks like in some ways."

However, what Joanna encounters has another side. "At our best, people will be attracted to our tradition," she said. "But what I always want to add to the conversation is that this isn't just about the Mennonite church welcoming people, but also saying, 'We want you to be part of the continual shaping of this church and this tradition.'

"Given our history and institutional stability, the Mennonite church can provide roots for these newer groups that need support and encouragement. At the same time we can grow in wisdom as these groups speak prophetically to us," Joanna wrote in *Mennonite Weekly Review* in May 2010. "Our relationship with this emerging movement can be one of learning as well as sharing."

New themes are emerging among those who live Anabaptist values in radical ways: awareness of racism, countering the American dream, economic justice, valuing women's experience, addressing immigration with hospitality, solidarity with the oppressed, intentionally sharing daily life. Joanna prompts us to look at our own formative experiences, then to be challenged by groups who are inspired by Anabaptism. "Are we willing to ask difficult questions about what is dying and what might be reborn among us?"

Mary E. Klassen, editor

Photo: **Joanna Shenk holds a copy of *Widening the Circle* in the bookstore at AMBS.**

Sharing a distinctly Christian peace witness

Humphrey Akogyeram
Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2000

Humphrey Akogyeram has thirty years of experience of serving the African Initiated Churches (AIC) in Ghana. He has found that conflict has negatively affected most AIC members through bitterness, hatred, disunity, tension, fear, enmity, anger, verbal and physical abuse, and secessions.

Humphrey said, "For me, the Anabaptist themes that are relevant to the AICs are Accommodation and Reconciliation. Thus accommodating the 'enemy' is an important part of the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a significant aspect of peacemaking. In a church where conflict is common, reconciliation is a theme that needs constant consideration in ways that are appropriate to the context of the AICs. Reconciliation is also a subject at the center of Christianity. For 'the gospel is about overcoming alienation and estrangement between God and ourselves, between us and others, and between all of us and creation.'" [John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*]

To read the full text of Humphrey Akogyeram's reflections on what Anabaptism means in his context, visit **www.ambs.edu/news-and-publications/publications/alumni-news** *and follow the link to his reflections.*

Marty Troyer
Master of Divinity 2008

In a city of six million people, how does a congregation of 60 have an effective witness to the Gospel?

What does it mean to have a distinctly Christian peace witness as Mennonites in the midst of massive city? Those are questions that Houston Mennonite Church, Houston, Texas, has asked itself.

Marty Troyer, the pastor and 2008 graduate of AMBS, is working on creating a witness with the blog he writes for the Belief section of the *Houston Chronicle* online edition. There are 30 bloggers for the site, but "I'm the only distinctive Christian peace presence," Marty said.

His topics circle around the overall theme of Shalom, defined as wholeness and welfare of the community. So he has written about the death penalty, economic justice, the practice of peacemaking (not simply nonviolence), racism, parenting, discipleship and civil disobedience.

Marty has been writing the Peace Pastor blog for a year and has about 100 posts. One posting had 17,000 readers, and the blog has had about a quarter of a million visits in total.

While online comments on the blog tend to be very critical, the email messages, phone calls and face-to-face comments have been "shockingly positive," Marty said. Some readers who were critical at first have come to respect his faith. They still don't agree with Marty's positions, but now they comment in ways that show they consider him a Christian brother.

Since moving to Houston, "I've become so much more Mennonite," Marty said. And through the voice that the blog gives the congregation, members are discovering that they are not alone. They are finding others who hold values similar to those of the Mennonite-Anabaptist faith. This gives them opportunities to connect with people doing the kind of things that they also believe are important. "We are becoming more of who we are called to be," Marty believes.

Marty Troyer's Peace Pastor blog can be found at **http://blog.chron.com/thepeacepastor**.

alumni news

Alan Stucky (Master of Divinity 2010) was ordained December 4 at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, Harper, Kan.

Melissa Miller (Master of Divinity 2007) is chair of the binational board of MennoMedia. She is pastor of Springstein Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Fernando Enns (former student) is the first to occupy the Chair of Peace Theology and Ethics at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Virginia Gerbrandt (Master of Divinity 2011) is assistant pastor of Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona, Man.

Fridbert August (Master of Divinity 2011) is teaching at the Mennonite University Fidelis in Curitiba, Brazil, and in October he was elected president of AIMB, the association of the Mennonite churches in Brazil, for 2012–13. This is comparable to a conference minister in the U.S., he writes. He also is pastor of the local congregation IEMAV.

V. Eugene Kennard (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2007) wrote *Telling Their Story*, which has been published by RoseDog Books, Pittsburgh, Pa., employing narrative criticism to help people better understand God's interactions with people in the Bible.

Donald Stoesz (Master of Divinity 1981) shares essays reporting his experiences as a prison chaplain in *Glimpses of Grace: Reflections of a Prison Chaplain*, published by Friesen Press, Victoria, B.C. ●

A learning community with an Anabaptist vision

AMBS aspires to own its Anabaptist identity with renewed resolve. Inspired by the early Anabaptists, we forthrightly embrace Jesus' call to "follow me" by educating leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. Emboldened by the Holy Spirit, we seek to move beyond the ethnocentric confines of our recent Mennonite history. As a learning community, we invite followers of Jesus Christ to practice with us as we:

Worship God in community every day—with broad participation of faculty, staff, students and guests to praise God, break bread, hear the Word, intercede in prayer and resolve anew to follow Jesus in the power of the Spirit. Practicing worship, confession of faith and prayer every day is a signature of AMBS.

Serve as leaders with a mission to share the peace of Jesus Christ—becoming ambassadors of peace who model love for enemies, forgiveness and mutual care in congregation, business, social service agency and neighborhoods. Leading as grace-filled, peace loving professionals is a signature of AMBS.

Witness to the reconciling power of the Spirit—to transform conflict, restore justice, care for creation and heal relationships through Jesus Christ who is our peace. Communicating forthrightly with gentleness and reverence in cross-cultural, inter-racial, inter-religious and creation-care contexts is a signature of AMBS.

Immerse ourselves in the Bible—as radical Jesus-centered and Spirit-attuned readers who learn together to interpret, contextualize, preach, pray, sing and dramatically orate the biblical narratives. Reveling in and proclaiming the enduring ability of the Bible to reveal God in Christ to us is a signature of AMBS.

Recover theology as the work of the people—by drawing from the wisdom of faith traditions, Scriptures and current contexts as we discern together how to be present-day disciples amid the dilemmas, tragedies and joys of daily life. Becoming theologically articulate disciples of Jesus who teach others theological praxis is a signature of AMBS.

Nurture relationships of integrity—honoring each other with mutual affection, celebrating the joy of friendship, affirming a vocation of singleness, upholding public covenants of marriage, modeling faithful sexuality, caring for children and welcoming strangers as a missional calling of the church. Being honest and accountable with longings, failures, joys and successes in spiritual friendships is a signature of AMBS.

Form communities of shalom—inviting diverse people to covenant together corporately to proclaim and embody the reconciling and saving reign of God, to be the visible body of Christ, practicing Spirit-led engagement with the world (in creation care, business, healing and justice) while being different from the world for Christ's sake. Commitment to witness to God's holistic mission through local congregations is a signature of AMBS.

Photo: The Human Development and Christian Formation class, led by Carrie Martens and Andy Brubacher-Kaethler, instructor in Christian formation and culture, meets in small groups in the AMBS Chapel of the Word.

We invite you to think with us about how we can be an Anabaptist learning community. What would you add to this list of practices? What counsel do you have about what to strengthen or perhaps remove?

Please send your counsel, encouragement or critique to *AMBS Window* editor, Mary E. Klassen (**mklassen@ambs.edu**) or to the address on the back page.

Your gifts at work

Dr. Vincent Harding, a colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., challenged the AMBS community to continue working toward a "multi-racial, beautiful, democratic society." His visit, January 16 and 17, marked Martin Luther King Jr. Day. AMBS was one of several agencies and organizations in Elkhart and Goshen that hosted Dr. Harding. With your gifts to AMBS, you helped to make this visit possible and you support the work of the AMBS's Damascus Road anti-racism team who coordinated the events on campus.

In one presentation, the former Mennonite pastor recounted how King declared that his place was with people who were sacrificing, suffering and dying. Then he asked, "Why have a God who we ask to take care of us and guide us if all we want are places that don't scare us. Going to stand with any deserted, pushed-aside people is a dangerous vocation. It is the only truly Jesus-connected vocation."

AMBS

AMBS Window
Spring 2012
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The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

Editor: Mary E. Klassen
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker
Photos: Peter Ringenberg, Mark Gingerich, SaeJin Lee

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
3003 Benham Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46517-1999
574 295-3726
www.ambs.edu
advancement@ambs.edu

President's Window

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

The downtown Goshen Theater was packed recently for a show by Ted & Co. TheaterWorks called "I'd like to buy an enemy." Gerald and I have known Ted from his early days in seminary. We delight to see how a theologically attuned artist captures the imagination of young and old, in overflowing audiences throughout North America. We're all fascinated—in awe, really—that the biblical stories are about fumbling, frightened, curious human beings a lot like us—real people who wanted more than anything to follow Jesus around.

We love the humor; no doubt about that! But even more, we're intrigued by what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus, for real. Loving enemies, for example, is hardly your everyday entertainment. It's Jesus' radical invitation to his disciples, to turn the world around. It's one of Jesus' most ignored teachings, but one that the early Anabaptists remembered. And now in our day, many people are newly intrigued with the Anabaptists.

Before heading to the theater, I read the *Mennonite Weekly Review* article on a recent conference of Southern Baptists on "Anabaptism and Contemporary Baptists." Rick Warren, renowned author and evangelical pastor of a 20,000 member church in Southern California, was a keynote speaker. "For 32 years, we have been building Saddleback Church on the lessons I've learned from the Anabaptists," he said. When AMBS professor John Rempel encouraged Warren to "raise the decibel level that discipleship is inseparable from love of enemy," Warren responded, "Yes, I will, because I believe the gospel is a gospel of non-retaliation."

Yesterday, our director of enrollment reported to me yet another conversation of many he has with prospective students of varied backgrounds, who discover (often through reading John Howard Yoder) the radical Jesus of the gospels.

AMBS is an Anabaptist seminary renewed in our commitment to educate leaders with a vision for God's shalom, including love for enemies. We are resolved to hold together in a Christ-centered whole what is often pulled apart in an increasingly polarized world. ●

panorama

Upcoming webinar

- **Embodying the story,** with Allan Rudy-Froese, April 19, 2:00–3:30 p.m. Eastern

Listen to AMBS presentations

Visit **www.ambs.edu/iTunesU** to hear:

- Dr. Vincent Harding's presentations commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Pastors Week presentations by Dr. Loren Johns and Dr. Nelson Kraybill on Revelation.

Chapel dedication

The Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount—new annex and renovation—will be dedicated May 4–5. Visit **www.ambs.edu/chapel-dedication** for details.

AMBS–Great Plains summer courses

Register by May 1 to receive a registration discount on the following classes:

- **John H. Yoder's Theological Legacy**
- **Conflict, Communication and Conciliation**

Summer courses at AMBS in Elkhart

Register by May 1 to receive a registration discount on the following classes:

- **Anabaptist History and Theology**
- **Hebrew Readings: Prophets**
- **Spirituality, Pastoral Care and Healing**
- **Congregational Song**
- **Family Systems and Pastoral Care**
- **Celebrating Christian Ritual in Worship**
- **Religious and Psychological Assessment**

The heart exam

Practicing frugality means making intentional choices to keep or let go of possessions we already own (clutter?) and what we acquire. This begins as an issue of stewardship but becomes a revealer of what's in our hearts. How does it feel to pass up buying a shirt that would make you shockingly attractive? Why is it not OK to use yard tools that are older than dirt but still work well? Why do I resist getting my sofa repaired instead of buying a new one? Such challenges help us look deeply within ourselves.

When we want to buy something (or acquire it another way), it's wise to consider the motives that drive us. We'll discover feelings and desires we didn't know we had, such as:

- inadequacy (having to prove myself by owning certain items),
- people-pleasing (getting others' approval by staying in style),
- perfectionism (making sure I have just the right high-performance rims for my car's tires or buying my kids everything they need because I want to be a good parent).

Recognizing these and other motives moves us to ask God: Why am I so needy? How will I learn to let you, O God, be enough?

Once a month I have an appointment not far from a large, college-slanted bookstore. I used to drop by there on my way home every month, coming away with at least one purchase. I have to confess I felt good as I drove home—as if I had friends (books) in the seat next to me. Finally I asked God, What's going on here? Is there anything unhealthy in this? While some of it was my healthy desire to learn and grow, it was also about having "smart" books because I hang out with some smart people. It was also about my desire to cocoon away my life reading rather than reaching out and loving people. So I decided to see how many months I could go without visiting the bookstore. It's been a good experiment.

This heart exam provides great fodder for reflection. We forego buying some little thing and say to God, Would you help me understand that you really are enough? Slowly we look to God a little more as the companion of our life and learn the joy of a simple, satisfied life.

Where to start

Consider the list below. (You'll probably think of ideas that suit your life and wants better.) If you did one or two of the following, how would your life be more focused on what you believe is important? How would it shape your character? What qualities might be built in you? What would you have more time and money for? How might it help you invest more in people and less in things?

> Slowly we look to God a little more as the companion of our life and learn the joy of a simple, satisfied life.

- Refuse to enter any kind of store more than once a week.
- Buy a new compact car every 10 years and not before.
- Wear the same shirt every Monday, the same shirt every Tuesday, the same shirt. …
- Move to a smaller home, condominium or apartment instead of moving up.
- Live on a weekly allowance of $10, $20 or $30.
- Eat out less than once a week.
- Limit time spent in stores and choose not to take children or grandchildren into stores.
- Give away a piece of clothing every time you buy a new piece of clothing (even from a thrift store).
- Prepare and eat an evening meal on Monday and eat it again on Wednesday. Prepare and eat an evening meal on Tuesday and eat it again on Thursday (or prepare one large meal on Monday and eat the same thing all week).
- Give yourself a "favorite item" allowance, such as a book allowance or power tool allowance (or computer gadgets, clothing, health and fitness aids, grooming and beauty items).
- Figure out what you need for a monthly or annual income to survive, add a tithe to it, add some savings to it and then from the rest, give 50 percent.

When we do such things, we aren't practicing legalism. We don't want to create pride in how well we obey a set of rules we've invented. The point is to make space for God in our lives, to love God with all of our selves and to love others as ourselves.

This article is adapted from Jan Johnson's book Abundant Simplicity, *with permission from InterVarsity Press.*

Anabaptist leaders living up to the call

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht is moderator-elect for Mennonite Church USA.

I am an Anabaptist leader, the product of a Mennonite church-planting effort in the mid-1970s in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. In the decades that followed, I accepted many leadership responsibilities within the church and its agencies. My pastoral calling came in 2003, birthed out of needs felt by the Armenia Mennonite Church during our four-year term of service in Colombia (2001–05). On many occasions, leaders around me called me to lead. These experiences helped me begin to understand the Anabaptists' embodiment of the "priesthood of all believers."

As Anabaptists, we understand the leader/pastor to be a facilitator of process and not the decision-making head of the church. Diverse models of power and authority are present today in our Mennonite congregations. But one main function of church leaders is to identify gifts and talents within the church body; this is one way to truly exercise power in a positive way.

In too many instances I have heard the complaint, "People don't want to serve on these committees or this board" or, "We don't have anyone … ." These statements do not indicate that God has failed in calling people but could mean that the church has not done its job of shaping people for ministry. They could also mean that people do not want to listen to the call to serve, or that the structure and power dynamics in a given context do not create an environment in which new leaders can accept these responsibilities and thrive in learning to carry them out.

Our task as leaders is to call forth these talents in others, even those that may not be as readily visible.

To be called as a leader means one must be willing to work hard and give of one's time to do church work. Our church's sense of calling should be that everyone as a believer has talents, and our task as leaders is to call forth these talents in others, even those that may not be as readily visible. This is part of my story; my pastor asked me to lead early on, and I said yes. As leaders, how are we calling others? How are we mentoring others into leadership roles?

Most recently in my development as a leader, I learned that the church needs many types of leaders. As a result, I chose to participate in the Values-Based Leadership Program, an Anabaptist leadership training course that takes place at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mt. Pleasant, Pa. In this program, I had the opportunity to reflect on what type of leader I am by taking the DiSC survey, reading the assigned materials, participating in discussions with my assigned cohort group and taking part in the two scheduled group retreats. I learned the five characteristics of a good leader:

- to encourage the heart,
- to inspire a shared vision,
- to enable others,
- to model the way,
- to challenge the process.

The model Jesus gives us in Matthew 28:18-20 of selecting disciples and then commissioning them to continue the kingdom work as he was leaving this world can be our guide. Jesus not only called the disciples but also empowered them with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). For three years they focused on spiritual and leadership formation, learning and following the Master. Jesus encouraged yet challenged his followers, inspiring them to share the vision and enabling them to do so with everyone, modeling the way.

What does Mennonite Church USA need today? We need new Anabaptist leaders willing to serve on all levels: in local congregations, at the conference level and at the national level. We need young adults who will help us older leaders see the world as they see it. We need leaders of diverse cultural backgrounds: women and men, ethnic Mennonites and converted Mennonites who will enrich us with their leadership. And we need Anabaptist leaders willing to lead with courage. TM

Learning to love my Appalachian neighbors

I wonder if the benefits of typing this article outweigh the costs, because in doing so I pollute drinking water, destroy homes and spew greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. I am cutting down forests, filling in valleys and leveling mountains. I am destroying the homes of wildlife and people and introducing nonnative species to a wasteland I help create.

How? My computer cord plugs into an outlet that connects to power lines strung to the nearest power plant, where electricity is generated from coal. Nearly half the United States' electricity comes from coal, about one-third of which comes from the Appalachian Mountains.

And the easiest way to extract coal from inside a mountain is to blast the top off. Literally. Of course the mountaintop has to go somewhere, so it slides down into the valleys, polluting water sources for local communities and causing coal dust to coat everything in sight.

Thus I act out injustice toward my neighbors while simultaneously preaching a gospel of sustainability.

God is a farmer who created humans in his image, to be caretakers for his garden. God lovingly planted each Appalachian tree and formed each chipmunk, trout and finch that resides there, finally adding humans to "work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15b). We clearly know how to work the land; it's the taking care part we don't seem to understand.

I act out injustice toward my neighbors while simultaneously preaching a gospel of sustainability.

After blasting, digging and carting away, coal companies cover the wound with a scar, plant nonnative grasses and claim they have restored the natural habitat—perhaps they even improved it. However, God weeps over his uprooted gardens and devastated communities.

What happened to the caretakers he created? When did they become thieves? But I do not wish to place full blame on the coal companies, for in using electricity I am just as guilty as they are.

The passage "love your neighbor as yourself" appears seven times in the Bible. According to 1 Corinthians 13, love "is not self-seeking" and "it always protects." The use of coal depends on selfish desires and protecting the right (or is it an undeserved privilege?) to cheap energy.

If my family switched to solar power, it would take 21 years for the solar panels to pay for themselves, and a wind turbine's lifespan is too short for economic sustainability. Our electric cooperative provides a much cheaper option in the form of coal. However, it also exploits our neighbors and destroys the home we share.

My hometown in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia lies a half hour from West Virginia—the second-largest coal-producing state in the country. The people who pay for my electricity are my neighbors in more than one sense, as we both call the Appalachians our home.

When I think of loving these neighbors as myself, I imagine returning to the Shenandoah Valley to find trees felled and burned to make way for pits dug into a charred landscape, as if I'd wandered onto the set of *The Lord of the Rings*. I put myself on the hill where I live and turn to look at the mountains that encircle me, mentally dotting them with bare, jagged sores and constant explosions; the creek in our woods flows orange.

I do not wish this curse upon anyone, though nearly everything I do adds a pebble to the burden my neighbor carries. Even as I scan the Internet for ways to remove those pebbles, I pile them up, sucking coal through the cord that powers my computer.

I see hope in solar, wind, geothermal and other alternative energy sources that lie just beyond my grasp, but that perhaps will inch closer as time goes on. For now, I try to reduce my energy consumption by using lights only when necessary, unplugging small appliances when not in use and deciding what I want to eat before opening the fridge door. So here I sit, in my dark bedroom with blinds open to a cloudy sky, doing what I can to hold back the pebbles.

Serena Townsend is a student at Goshen (Ind.) College and an intern with *The Mennonite* this spring.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

MCC supports victims of Syria conflict

Mennonite Central Committee appeals for $500,000 and relief kits.

Ben Younan

In a more peaceful time, orphans Alla and Marah look out over the city of Homs, Syria. Their orphanage, a ministry of the Syrian Orthodox Church and supported by Mennonite Central Committee's Global Family education sponsorship program, has now moved to a safer location.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is supporting the efforts of local organizations in Syria and Jordan that are helping people affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria. As the violence in Syria continues, many people who have been injured, displaced or are grieving the loss of family members are seeking support for food, medicine and other basic needs.

"MCC is in a unique position to respond to the humanitarian needs in the region due to our long history and strong relationships in the Middle East," says Bruce Guenther, director of MCC disaster response.

MCC is appealing for $500,000 and relief kits to assist partner organizations in the Middle East as they provide humanitarian aid and build peace at the community level.

A significant part of MCC's response will help partners in Lebanon expand efforts that strengthen conflict prevention efforts and disaster preparedness. This includes media training, encouraging dialogue among young leaders, trauma training and more.

In Syria, MCC is providing approximately $100,500 to help a local organization provide food baskets to 500 families for six months and small monthly cash allotments for daily bread and to pay for medical costs, utilities and other basic needs. Because of safety concerns, the organization MCC is working with in Syria cannot be named.

"Families receiving this assistance in Syria have fled the city of Homs and are staying in rural areas," says Guenther. "Many have left everything behind—their belongings, homes and livelihoods—to escape to safety. Many have been injured."

Some reports estimate that 70,000 to 80,000 Syrians had fled to Jordan by late February. Some of these families are receiving support from Caritas Jordan, an MCC partner agency that has set up distribution operations in Mafraq and Ramtha, two cities near the Jordanian-Syrian border.

In early March, MCC sent two shipping containers of 5,830 school kits, 6,900 hygiene kits, 7,350 blankets and 1,229 relief kits to Jordan, where supplies will be distributed by Caritas.

"Families have been traumatized by the violence they have witnessed," says Daryl Byler, an MCC representative based in Jordan, who talked with several families during a recent visit to the Caritas distribution operations in Mafraq.

Caritas has significant experience working with refugees and the host communities through its work with supporting families from Iraq. Caritas is also assisting vulnerable families in the host community.

One of the women receiving support, who identified herself only as Salwa, says she along with her husband and four children fled the city of Homs six weeks ago after two neighbors were killed and her husband's grocery store was taken over by Syrian security forces. They fled to Jordan with the clothes they were wearing.

"Whenever her children hear fireworks (often part of local wedding celebrations) they fear that the violence has followed them from Homs to Jordan," says Byler. "Her husband has not been able to find work in Mafraq. She describes her family's most urgent needs as security, milk and mattresses."

This family has managed to find rental accommodations in Jordan, but housing is becoming a problem as more refugees continue to arrive, says Byler. Families registered with official refugee agencies have access to education and health services. However, many families fear reprisal when they return to Syria and have chosen not to register with official refugee agencies.

Salwa and her family, along with many other families who have fled to Jordan, have not sold their home and anticipate returning to Syria.

"I asked Salwa what message she would want to share with people in the West," says Byler. "Her swift reply was, 'Please do not forget the Syrian people.' "—*Gladys Terichow of Mennonite Central Committee*

Pastor works to overcome 'allergy to evangelism'

Denver jazz night called 'Mennonite Pentecostal contemplative' service.

Photo provided

Musicians lead an afternoon blues and folk music worship time at First Mennonite Church of Denver: (left to right) Vern Rempel on guitar, Chad Pittman on guitar, Taylor Berry on harmonica, and Tony Pfeiffer on drums.

Challenged by a comment from André Gingerich Stoner that Mennonites "tend to love service, flirt with peace and are allergic to evangelism," Vern Rempel, senior pastor of First Mennonite Church of Denver, came back from his summer 2011 sabbatical with a prescription: to create more open settings to invite newcomers to experience FMC's community of love. (Stoner is director of holistic witness and interchurch relations for Mennonite Church USA).

"For some reason, when it's church, we have all these hesitations: 'I don't want to tell people; they'll think I'm evangelizing them.' But what occurred to me is that everybody needs good community in their lives," Rempel says. "And I thought, I can invite people to community, where the goal would be not for me to tell them what I know they need to know but for us to meet each other and discover what the Holy Spirit has between us." He adds that he came to this more relational, less "preachy" brand of evangelism in part through conversations with well-known evangelical Ted Haggard and author/educator Parker Palmer.

Rempel started by brainstorming some outreaches that would flow out of his own passions and that he thought he would enjoy doing with new people. A love of jazz and blues resulted in what he calls a "Mennonite Pentecostal contemplative service" in the FMC sanctuary on Sundays at 12:30 p.m. Since last October, this 45-minute "improvised music and improvised reflection" service has grown to a group of five to 10 musicians and more than 35 participants. Hymns are done in more of a gospel style mix with jazz standards, such as Duke Ellington's "Come Sunday," and other familiar tunes, such as "My Funny Valentine."

Herm Weaver, conference minister for Mountain States Mennonite Conference, says, "When you do different types of outreach, you get beyond the ethnicity that's housed in our current worship services. My sense is that we're pretty ethnic about the way we do church, and it's often hard for people other than Mennonites to access."

Carlene Hill, a four-year member of FMC with a Pentecostal background who assists with preaching for the blues service, says the more relaxed atmosphere is helpful for community outreach. "We don't want newcomers to feel as though they are on the outside looking in but to feel part of the worship experience. The best way we can achieve this is by creating a space that isn't intimidating, which a highly structured church service can be if you're not familiar with a church's protocol."

Another new initiative sprang from Rempel's work and study with Palmer on "circles of trust." In 75 minutes every Thursday night, participants gather in a home for a facilitated time of confidential, judgment-free story sharing and reflection. Usually 10 to 15 people participate on a given night out of a total of around 30, many of whom do not attend FMC.

First, Rempel reminds the group of touchstones, such as, "Always invitation, never invasion" (no one is ever required to speak) and, "No fixing, advising or correcting." After a "warm-up" story prompt—a poem or Scripture reading—and 20-25 minutes of silent contemplation, everyone is invited to "share into the circle." During this time no feedback is given in any way to the person speaking—not even through body language—as all participants are asked to avoid eye contact and instead focus on a symbolic centerpiece.

Rempel has created business cards that attendees can take to hand out. However, the goal of these expressions of evangelism is not necessarily to add to FMC's membership; instead, he hopes that one or both of the new programs will become church plants. "There's a lot of openness and desire for the message of community, grace, love and justice—things that we as Mennonites care about deeply," Weaver says. "I think the time is really right for us to move beyond the churches we have now and try to create new circles of people who can be the next iteration of what it means to be Anabaptist in the city."—*Jessica Farmwald for Mennonite Church USA*

Ten-year-old girl studies alongside adults

By this summer, Benin Bible Institute will have graduated 900 church leaders.

Photo provided

Doréa Boko at the Benin Bible Institute.

With the sixth graduating class this summer, Benin Bible Institute will have provided churches with about 900 leaders, some of whom hold high positions in the national government. Other pastors with BBI diplomas serve their congregations in remote villages, working to better the quality of life for their members. However, when Mennonite Mission Network associate Anne Garber Kompaoré taught biblical geography at the institute last November, her most remarkable student was 10 years old.

One day after lunch, Kompaoré was longing for a rest. The grueling week of eight-hour teaching days in the humidity of Cotonou, the coastal city where BBI is located, was depleting Kompaoré's energy. She had made it out of the lecture hall, where 70 church leaders continued to discuss the material she had presented that morning. Halfway up the stairs to the refuge of her second-floor room for a midday siesta, a child's voice stopped her. Turning, Kompaoré was surprised to see the diminutive figure of Doréa, the 10-year-old daughter of Arlette and Théophane Boko, administrative assistant and caretaker, respectively, of the Bible school.

I truly love living here.—Doréa Boko

"I have some questions about things I didn't understand when you were teaching," Doréa told Kompaoré.

Doréa, who lives with her parents in the ground-floor apartment behind the lecture hall, agreed to wait until after Kompaoré's rest to discuss her questions.

When Kompaoré went downstairs an hour later, she was surprised to see Doréa Boko's copious lecture notes.

"She had some specific questions of a few things she had not quite picked up," Kompaoré says. "This was probably the most touching compliment I received the entire week—and that from an uncounted but very attentive participant."

Kompaoré says that Doréa had been listening as "quiet as a mouse" during all the lectures, but she didn't realize until that moment how carefully Doréa had been following.

Doréa is one of the top students in the fifth grade of her elementary school and is already looking forward to serving God as a gynecologist or a surgeon someday.

Doréa says she isn't bored by being the only child among all the church leaders that come to study at Benin Bible Institute but appreciates the opportunities to learn from the lecturers that come from different parts of Benin and many other countries, such as Nigeria, France, the United States, Canada—and, in Kompaoré's case, Burkina Faso.

"I truly love living here," Doréa says.

Doréa's father, Théophane Boko, was one of the first Beninese Christians to welcome the Mennonite mission workers who came to live in Benin in 1987. He was also a member of Benin Bible Institute's first graduating class. Having lived in Nigeria for many years, Théophane Boko has a good command of English, which has facilitated his interactions with North American Mennonites on fellowship visits, many of whom have memorable stories of adventures on Boko's motorcycle.

Benin Bible Institute grew out of a request made by the Protestant churches of Benin, many of them African Initiated Churches, nearly 50 years ago. For two decades, Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network, sent lecturers to Benin for periodic teaching visits. These seminars laid the foundation for a three-year systematic Bible training program that became Benin Bible Institute in 1996. Mennonite Mission Network continues to be partners with BBI.

Kompaoré has served as a linguist and Bible translation consultant since 1982 in what is now Burkina Faso. Her husband, Daniel Kompaoré, is the national president of the Apostolic Mission Church.

Anne Garber Kompaoré served with several Mennonite mission agencies throughout her career. The Kompaorés minister with the support of Commission to Every Nation, an interdenominational mission-sending agency, and Mennonite Mission Network.—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network*

A united community celebrates in Spain

Church in Burgos with many MC USA connections celebrates new building.

Jose Lozona

The youth praise band leads worship at the inaugural youth service on Jan. 13 of a church in Burgos, Spain.

Two years ago, two smaller churches in Burgos merged to form Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas (United Anabaptist Communities).

The newly formed church soon outgrew its small building. On Jan. 13-15, after years of planning and months of Saturdays spent finishing the building's interior, the community dedicated its new building—the first free-standing Protestant church building in Burgos.

While a construction company erected the building, everything else, including the floors, interior walls, all the plumbing and electricity, a kitchen, the bathrooms, the stairs, the ironwork railing, the doors, the ceiling, the parking lot, landscaping and the walkways were done by church members.

The members worked together in their free time every Saturday morning for many months.

The building and the community in Spain have many ties to various agencies of the American Mennonite church:

- Connie and Dennis Byler and the Brian and Noelia Fox family are Mennonite Mission Network workers living in Burgos who support this church community.
- Some of the money the church used for the building came from a Join Hands grant from Mennonite Men.
- Carlos Romero, the executive director of Mennonite Education Agency, attended the building dedication ceremony on behalf of Mennonite Church USA.

"We were literally floating on a cloud of glory, God's glory, for a couple of weeks after this," wrote Connie Byler in a prayer letter. "Brothers and sisters who had broken off from the church are now coming back to fellowship. Several neighbors are coming to our meetings. … There is such a sense of gratitude to God."—*Mennonite Mission Network staff*

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Everence oversees Church Extension Services

Core functions will be transfered from Newton, Kan., to Goshen, Ind.

Everence is now providing support and supervision for Mennonite Church USA's 53-year-old facilities loan program for urban, racial/ethnic and new immigrant congregations.

Established by the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1958, Church Extension Services (CES) provides much-needed loans to congregations and initiatives that have difficulty qualifying through traditional lending institutions. The $5 million fund is supported by the sale of investment securities to mission-driven investors in 22 states.

"[CES] meshes well with the financial mission and ministry of Everence," says Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA's associate executive director for churchwide operations. "This partnership enhances both of these important services to the church."

"As Christians, we can help open doors of opportunity for our local and global neighbors," says Mark Regier, director of stewardship investing at Everence. "I see many opportunities for Everence to help sustain and expand the work of [CES] in supporting congregations."

Regier, who also manages the Everence community investing programs, says, "Everence Community Investments seeks innovative ways to channel investment dollars to underserved communities in the United States and abroad, by funding neighborhood revitalization, low-income housing, micro-enterprise development and environmental businesses. The work of [CES] is a natural fit for us."

The move began in early 2011, after a decision to align the two organization's boards of directors was approved by both CES and Everence Community Investments.

Fuller integration will occur in the year ahead. This spring, the core CES functions will transfer from Newton, Kan., to the Everence headquarters in Goshen, Ind. The transition will conclude J. Jarrett Stucky's role as CES manager. Michael Horn, Everence director of charitable products and church loans, will pick up primary CES lending responsibilities in April 2012.

"[CES] fulfills an important missional need for our faith community," says Larry Miller, Everence president and CEO and chair of the CES board of directors. "Jarrett Stucky has provided invaluable leadership to the program over the past 13 years, and we are grateful for his expertise in helping facilitate this transition."

Everence already has two other church loan programs—through the Everence First Mortgage Loan Program and Everence Federal Credit Union—which make money available to congregations and institutions to build new facilities or improve existing locations.—*Everence*

Six women honored by RAW

Radical Anabaptist Women hold inaugural banquet in New York City.

Radical Anabaptist Women (RAW) hosted its inaugural banquet on March 10 in New York City to honor six women leaders in ministry. This year's six honorees were Keyla Cortez Vanegas, Nancy Maldonado, Sara Mateo Deo, Melody Pannell, Hyacinth Stevens and Eivy Alvarado.

Cortez Vanegas is from Honduras and volunteering through International Visitor Exchange Program. She attends Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship. Maldonado serves as a community liaison for the Groundswell Project at King of Glory Tabernacle Church in the Bronx, N.Y. Mateo Deo serves at Evangelical Tabernacle Mennonite Church in Brooklyn, N.Y. Pannell, who works as a counselor and is in the seminary program at Virginia Union University, is the founder of Destiny's Daughters—a mentorship program for girls. She is a member at Affinity Mennonite, Harlem, N.Y—formerly called Seventh Avenue Mennonite. Stevens is a pastor at King of Glory Tabernacle. Alvarado ministers at United Revival Mennonite Church in Brooklyn.

RAW is a group of Mennonite women ministers in New York City. Addie Banks, Sylvia Shirk, Sandra Perez and Ruth Yoder Wenger lead RAW. RAW's mission is to seek out and mentor outstanding young women in ministry.

Forty women and men joined the event at Colors restaurant in New York City. Perez said the six women honored this year faced obstacles in their lives but persevered and took on the added responsibility of ministering in their communities. For example, Maldonado came from a dysfunctional family and was sexually abused as a child. She struggled on and off with a drug addiction until a complete recovery in 2002 through God's deliverance, she said.

"I am living a life of recovery," she said in an interview on March 12. "I'm learning to have healthier relationships with other women. I'm able to give back." Maldonado is now in the process of applying to seminary.

"It was such a special occasion, and I really wanted the women to shine," says Perez. "They are such exceptional role models."—*Anna Groff*

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Pies and performances for peace

Ted & Company shows raise money for Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Steven Stauffer

Tim Ruebke (left) and Ted Swartz perform on March 9. Ruebke is executive director at Fairfield Center, a mediation center in Harrisonburg, Va., and Swartz's acting partner.

No one at Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church on March 9 balked at spending $38.50 or more on a fresh-baked pie. The crowd that attended the Ted & Co. show and pie auction to support Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) was eager to bid.

Ted Swartz, who served as auctioneer, started the bids for each of the pies at the random price of $38.50, but most of them went for much more—$100, $200 or even $300. The Akron pie auction alone raised $2,200.

The event, called "Peace, Pies and Prophets," was the first in a series of three shows held over the weekend of March 9-11 that benefitted the work of CPT. The second show was held in Philadelphia and the third in Souderton, Pa. Ted & Co. performed "I'd Like to Buy an Enemy," a humorous series of vignettes that reveal how the idea of an enemy is constructed and sustained through propaganda, ignorance and prejudice. In between sketches, Swartz and his acting partner Tim Ruebke served as auctioneers.

For the Akron show, Akron Mennonite Church member John Stoner served as "pie wrangler" and rustled up a variety of home-baked pies, including dark chocolate pecan, apple-blueberry and black raspberry. There were twice as many pies as were needed for the auction, so after the show attendees could purchase pies and then share them.

CPT's mission is to be a nonviolent presence in communities where lethal conflict is a reality. They accompany local partners in nonviolent alternatives to conflict and, according to their website, "believe that faithfulness to what Jesus taught and modeled calls us to more active peacemaking."

Tim Nafziger, CPT's outreach coordinator, says the goal of Peace, Pies and Prophets was to raise awareness among Mennonites and other Ted & Co. fans about CPT's work. Swartz approached Nafziger in 2011 about using the "I'd Like to Buy an Enemy" sketches in a show to benefit CPT.

The pie auction addition came about because Nafziger remembered his mother making a pie for a New Danville Mennonite School, Lancaster, Pa., auction when he was a student there. The auction organizers thought the pie was "too good" to place in the baked goods sale and decided to auction it off instead.

When the new CPT offices opened in Chicago in 2010, Nafziger recalled the auctioning of the New Danville pie and proposed a similar event to raise funds for CPT. The Chicago event proved to be popular, so Nafziger looked for a time to repeat it.

He says it made sense to combine the Ted & Co. show with a pie auction, which is both "fun and fairly simple." At the Peace, Pies and Prophets show, each program contained a unique bidder number and information about CPT's work around the world.

Nafziger says that several other shows are planned, including one in South Bend, Ind., on May 3 and another on May 4 in Chicago. A show in Madison, Wis., is also in the works.

"The final total raised for all three shows was $15,070," says Nafziger about the weekend, "which is almost exactly what it costs—on average—to fund one CPTer full time in the field. I'm very grateful."—*Melanie Hess for* The Mennonite

Ted Swartz (right) during a vignette in "I'd Like to Buy an Enemy," to raise money for Christian Peacemaker Teams on March 9 at Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church

Basement walls become Holy Land scenes

Deep Run Mennonite Church offers colorful, imaginative area for children.

"Deep Run Mennonite East is a congregation that welcomes children," said a parent after attending our Preschool Sunday service.

Members at Deep Run Mennonite East in Perkasie, Pa., desire to share God's love with our own children as well as those in the community.

The church hosts Bible school, Sunday school, Boys & Girls Club, Junior Mennonite Youth Fellowship and MYF as opportunities for children.

However, members realized that many of those opportunities were carried out in a rather drab physical environment—the church basement. Sedate blue-gray walls broken up by white doors did not reflect the joy and enthusiasm of the children who gathered within those walls. However, that was about to change.

In the fall of 2009, Mae Kulp, then chairperson of Christian education, called together a small group of women to brainstorm on ways to transform the drab basement into an inviting place for our children to gather.

The group began with the idea of converting the rarely used basement kitchen into "His Kid's Café," complete with a striped awning, "stone work" on the café front and round tables. The "café" now offers a gathering place for the children to enjoy a snack with friends before Sunday school.

While the newly painted café walls brightened the area up a bit, the group was not finished. They wondered, why not bring scenes representing the Holy Land into our children's area?

A friend of Mae Kulp and retired art teacher Mary Blough listened to the ideas and sketched them on paper. A group of 10 Deep Run members, many of them grandparents, painted walls that became the canvas for the paintings.

Kathy Moyer, Sharon Leatherman and Kirsten Rice spent countless hours painting the scenes on the walls. Junior high student Katrina Rice painted the wall outside her Sunday school classroom.

The previously uninviting children's area began coming alive with shops and scenes from the Holy Land.

A town street with terraced homes, trees and flowers emerged first, followed by a carpenter's shop where a whimsical mouse plays among the wood as a cat snores nearby. A small gray donkey laden with a cart of fresh vegetables makes its way to the vegetable and fruit shop.

The lifelike pomegranates, apples, lemons and bananas are displayed in the shop. Across the room in a Galilean kitchen, a loaf of brown bread bakes in a fire-burning stone oven. Beyond the shops, on the outskirts of town, a cow, sheep, donkey, rooster and doves all share a stable.

The congregation celebrated the newly painted children's area with a prayer of dedication and a coffee time in His Kid's Café on Feb. 26.—*Deep Run Mennonite Church*

Photo provided

HIS
KIDS
CAFE

Karen Detweiler and Linda Kolva staff "His Kids Café."

Wes Cosand

Sharon Leatherman, artist, brings fabric to life.

Peace vigil going strong since 2003

Group gathers in front of the Goshen, Ind., courthouse every week.

War
is
Bankrupting
America!

Serena Townsend

Mose Beachey from Goshen, Ind., on Feb. 15.

MOURN THE DEAD
6379 SOLDIERS KILLED
IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN
MILLIONS OF VICTIMS
Support dialogue Build bridges
STOP THE KILLING!

Serena Townsend

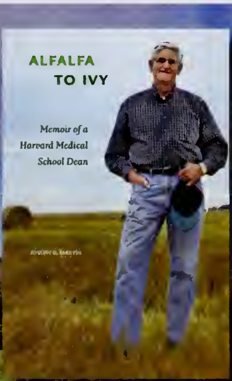
Vigil participants in front of the courthouse in Goshen, Ind.

In front of the courthouse in downtown Goshen, Ind., 14 people came together around an outstretched banner. They all bore somber faces, as if mourning a loved one. Just like every other Wednesday noon since 2003, these people gathered Feb. 15 for a peace vigil.

"Mourn the dead," their banner read, stating the number of soldiers killed in the Middle East conflicts—6,379—and that there are "millions of victims." Two people take turns reading names of those who have died—and when and how—into a microphone.

"I think if more people knew about it, they'd at least join in the spirit of it," said Evelyn Kreider of College Mennonite Church in Goshen. She said the 12-14 people who show up every week come from various denominations and congregations around Goshen, "which I think strengthens it."

A person in a white mini van turned right onto Main Street, giving a thumbs up and a long honk as they drove past. Other drivers stopped at the intersection stared curiously; some honked as the white van did. After about 10 minutes of listing names, the group observed a moment of silence. They ended with a reading of Psalm 46, and rolled up the banner. They'll keep meeting until the war ends, and then they'll "dance in the street," as one participant said. —*Serena Townsend, intern for* The Mennonite



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Mennonite Men 'joins hands' with Mission Network

$3,000 to Colombian churches and $2,000 to Quito Mennonite in Ecuador

Daniela Sanchez

Children play on the church grounds of Quito Mennonite Church during the Peace Education Workshops. The congregation hopes to purchase its own church in the near future.

Mennonite Mission Network is using a Mennonite Men JoinHands grant to help three churches in Latin America make their dreams of owning their own building a reality.

$2,000 went to help complete the roof at the Pan de Vida (Bread of Life) Church in the Nuevo Milenio neighborhood of Barranquilla, Colombia. $1,000 helped purchase a lot and cement for a new church building for Esperanza Viva (Living Hope) in the San Vicente neighborhood of Barranquilla. $2,000 is seed money for Quito (Ecuador) Mennonite Church's plan for its own facility in the future.

As a new church in an urban area, the Mennonite church in Quito faces a challenge in raising enough money to purchase its own building. The space they use works for now, but the rent is high, and the church anticipates the need for a permanent location in the future.

"This grant is to be considered seed money that provides encouragement in ongoing fund-raising among partners," says Linda Shelly, Mission Network's director for Latin America. "Urban Quito is a very expensive place to purchase property, yet this is the goal set by the people of the church, who see themselves serving long-term in this neighborhood."

César Moya and Patricia Urueña, Mennonite Mission Network workers sent by the Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia, lead the church and help prepare Ecuadorian leaders. The church has an active peace education program with children in the neighborhood of El Inca, near where the church first started. The average attendance is around 45-50, but the numbers vary depending on how many Colombian refugees are participating at any point in time. Many of them pass through Quito and don't become permanent church members.

Since 1999, the service component of Mennonite Men—JoinHands—has offered an annual tithe grant to Mennonite denominational mission boards. The portion that was donated to Mennonite Mission Network in 2011 has helped these three churches, as well as the new building for Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas in Burgos, Spain.—*Andrew Clouse of Mennonite Mission Network*

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Three women get MDS-renovated homes

Mennonite Disaster Service offers service in Alabama after tornadoes.

Emily Will

Antoinette Banks (right) with Mennonite Disaster Service volunteer Melvin Horst of Ephrata, Pa., in front of her restored Birmingham home. Horst was at the home on Feb. 14 to patch the front steps, caulk the bathtub and finish trim work.

On April 27, 2011, some 60 tornadoes tore through Birmingham, Ala., uprooting huge trees and thousands of lives in one of the area's most devastating disasters ever. Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers have been at work there and at nearby sites since shortly after the twisters, providing the labor to rebuild homes for victims who have no insurance and few economic resources. Now, three displaced individuals are moving into rebuilt homes. These are their stories.

Antoinette Banks says she had put her four foster children, then ages 2 months to 4 years, to bed on April 27 and had gone to her desk on the lowest level of the three-floor split-level home in the Pratt City district. She was reading the Bible on her computer when her ex-husband phoned to advise her to get the children to shelter. She discounted the warning. But moments later, when the Lord spoke to her—"Go get the children"—she didn't hesitate.

Banks bounded down the stairs carrying all four children in her arms when the roof caved in on the bedrooms where the children had been sleeping. She wedged the little ones into a corner and shielded them with her body. Moments later, a massive tree blew over and hit the kitchen, close to where they huddled. Window shards flew and the house shook.

The entire time, Banks says, she prayed. "We all came through without a scratch," she says.

The house did not fare as well. She had no insurance, but her faith remained unshakeable.

MDS project coordinator, Bill McCoy, from Manheim, Pa., visited Banks to see whether MDS could help her rebuild.

"When Mr. Bill came out, I didn't believe him when he said the house could be fixed," Banks says. It looked too far gone to her. But some of the framing was still intact, and an architect drew plans that incorporated it.

In February, with only finishing touches to complete, Banks anticipated moving back into the renovated house—having four bedrooms rather than three—any day. Paperwork for adopting the infant foster daughter, now 11 months, is near completion, and Banks hopes to adopt the other three children as well.

Joan Diane Taylor, 59 and in poor health, was napping when her phone rang last April 27. The phone call was from a neighbor. "Are you OK? A tree limb has fallen on your house," Taylor's neighbor said.

"I hadn't even known there was a tornado," Taylor says. The tornado damaged the trailer beyond repair. Over the next nine and a half months, Taylor lived with a succession of friends and relatives. Last July, Taylor received another blow when her husband died.

Fortunately, Taylor received $30,200 from FEMA and a phone call from Bill McCoy, project coordinator for MDS in Birmingham. "Bill took me to lunch two times," Taylor says. " 'We're going to build you a house,' he told me."

On Feb. 23, after an awaited electrical inspection, Taylor moved into her brand-new 1,000-square-foot home. A local company provided funds for furnishings.

MDS also renovated the house of Barbara Thomas, 71. *—Emily Will for Mennonite Disaster Service*

Janet Plenert

Joan Diane Taylor, right, and friend Frances Brasher on front porch of Taylor's new home in Leeds, Ala., built by MDS volunteers on the spot where her trailer once stood.

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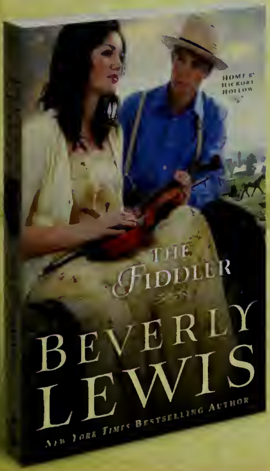

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Where is authority in the church?

Leonard Gross: In the New Testament, it was in the local congregation.

[T]he word that Jesus used in the Aramaic language, like the equivalent word that the New Testament writers used in the Greek language [ekklésia], does not mean a gathering for worship nor an administration; it means a public gathering to deal with community business. Our modern terms 'assembly,' 'parliament,' 'town meeting,' are the best equivalents. The church is not just a certain number of persons or a specific gathering of persons assembled for a particular religious rite. The church is God's people gathered as a unit, as a people, gathered to do business in his name, to find what it means here and now to put into practice this different quality of life that is God's promise to them and to the world and their promise to God and service to the world. ... [The church is] a new way of living together. ... [I]f it lives faithfully, it is ... the most powerful tool of social change.—John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution*, 30-31

In only two New Testament passages (Matthew 16 and 18) does Jesus mention "church," and as eminent church historian and biblical scholar John Howard Yoder states, the term "ekklésia" is a political term—a parliament called to deliberate on the important business at hand, including disputed matters, with the goal of reaching reconciling consensus. This new concept and reality that Jesus created resulted in a new creation: of individual Jesus-followers who together, in shared discipleship, formed a distinctive community of nonviolent love for one another—reaching out as well to all, including enemies, in service.

Furthermore, the church that Jesus established was local in essence, imbued with Christ's Spirit. Nowhere in the New Testament is the church—the "ekklésia"—anything other than the local congregation, self-ruled. There was no hint of a hierarchical episcopacy or of an oligarchic presbytery. Even the Apostle Paul was accountable to the congregation at Antioch, and Peter to Jerusalem. In fact, "the witness to the congregation's responsibility to evaluate the ministry of the itinerant prophet extends into the Didache" (Yoder, The Fullness of Christ, 29).

Moreover, the term "bishop"—perhaps better translated "overseer" ("episcopos") when found in the New Testament —refers to a leader within the setting of the local congregation, as Yoder correctly notes: "The roles least justified by the witness of the New Testament ... are those of priest and of (supercongregational) bishop. ... The notion of an officer over a large district ('diocese') is not in the New Testament" (*Body Politics*, 60, 87). Yoder also says that three terms in various New Testament contexts are used for the same office: "elder," "overseer/bishop" and "shepherd" (Acts 20, 1 Peter 5 and Titus 1), that "they constituted the collegial leadership of the self-governing local congregation. There are several of these persons in a given congregation" (*The Fullness of Christ*, 10-11).

Anabaptists in Switzerland, from their outset in 1524-25, also understood "church" in the sense of "ekklésia," as an assembly where decisions were made, where mutual encouragement and admonition was a given. They rejected the idea of hierarchy (episcopal polity) and of oligarchy (presbyterian polity), declaring that a congregational polity is the only true polity found in the New Testament. They underscored Matthew 18 as describing the inner workings of "ekklésia," along with 1 Corinthians 14:26-32, where each and every member may have the floor, through a prescribed orderly process. In Reformation times, these procedures were sometimes called "the rule of Christ" and "the rule of Paul." Yoder also speaks to this:

"The Swiss Brethren made much of the right of all to speak (1 Corinthians 14:[26], 29). As their leadership patterns settled down after a generation the Anabaptist communities generally had three named local ministries (in addition to the itinerant): the congregational moderator or elder, the 'servant of the word' (teacher) and the servant of the poor (modern 'deacon'); but they do not seem to have invoked biblical warrant for the pattern. Through the centuries marked by persecution and rural isolation, the original principle of congregational accountability and the rejection of noncongregational financial support were retained and reinforced" (*The Fullness of Christ*, 41-42).

The Mennonite Church USA Convention: our Jerusalem Council and our Schleitheim

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials.—Acts 15:28

Given our long history of congregationalism, exactly where do or should extracongregational resolutions and confessions of faith fit into our Mennonite ethos? We have both biblical and church-historical precedents to help guide us in answering this question. If the New Testament church was indeed congregational in nature, where does the Jerusalem Council fit in to the scheme of things? Where does our Schleitheim synod fit in? And where do our denominational and area-conference conventions fit in?

The Jerusalem Council: At the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), a main question arose, whether circumcision is essential for salvation. Paul and Barnabas, appointed by the Antioch church ("ekklésia"), took the matter to Jerusalem, where they were welcomed by the Jerusalem church ("ekklésia"). A council composed of the apostles and elders was convened. The gathered leaders ("plēthos") debated the issue at length, after which Peter spoke, declaring that salvation occurs through the grace of the Lord Jesus, and this for both Jew and Gentile. Barnabas and Paul then spoke about the marvelous ways God had been working among the Gentiles.

James concluded by summarizing the sense of the meeting, saying, "We should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God" with nonessentials—such as circumcision—but remain solely with the essentials as regards the law of Moses, namely, to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication and from blood. This summary the other apostles and elders accepted, unanimously. They then took this action to the whole Jerusalem church ("ekklésia"), which gave its consent, that members be chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas, who would take an epistle back to the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.

The missive included the following: "[I]t has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials." The men were sent off, traveling to Antioch, where they gathered the believers ("plēthos"), some of whom may have come from Syria and Cilicia (the word for the gathering is not "ekklésia"). The epistle was read and accepted with joy.

It is instructive to note that Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Antioch church ("ekklésia"); the Jerusalem Conference ("plēthos"), as a synod (in the sense of an ecclesiastical advisory council), took its actions to the "whole Jerusalem church" ("ekklésia") and the apostles and elders, with the blessing of the church ("ekklésia"), appointed messengers to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch.

The word "plēthos" (multitude) was used in the two gatherings that were not church/"ekklésia" (vv. 12, 30). This contrasting terminology, coming in the same chapter and from the same author, is vitally significant in isolating what the author of Acts defines as church ("ekklésia"), as the discerning body of believers, gathered to do business. And this accords with Jesus' definition of church/"ekklésia" in Matthew 16 and 18.

The Anabaptist Schleitheim Synod: The Anabaptist equivalent to the Jerusalem Council occurred in Schleitheim, Switzerland, in 1527, two years after the birth of Anabaptism. During these two years, the movement grew with rapid explosiveness and was in danger of losing its original impulse: entering the vision of Jesus by emulating him and his apostolic church individually (discipleship) as well as corporately (becoming the veritable body of Christ). This included a forgiving love for all, including enemies, as Conrad Grebel, speaking for the whole group, already stated in 1524: "True believing Christians ... use neither worldly sword nor war, since killing has ceased with them entirely."

With the wildfire nature of the sudden expansion of a movement, some of the core principles, including nonviolence, so well understood by that first, urban group of close-knit Anabaptists in Zurich, seemed to be ignored, if indeed they were even known by the growing masses of converts. Some seemed unaware of the Christocentric, nonviolent beginnings of the movement. It had become a movement, riding off in all directions.

Yet the original Zurich impulse did not die out. Felix Mantz and Michael Sattler continued to proclaim the message of a peaceable Jesus-discipleship during this chaotic interim. In this dire moment in early 1527, Michael Sattler called for a meeting at Schleitheim, a momentous event of historic proportions. The group reached consensus on seven points that would prove foundational for this Anabaptist movement from then on.

Wherein lies the significance of our Schleitheim Confession? Here we find what would become the ongoing Anabaptist understandings of the New Testament. As John Howard Yoder says, the heart of the Schleitheim Seven Articles—as well as of Conrad Grebel's 1524 letters to Thomas Müntzer—lies in the model of Jesus:

Convention resolutions and confessions are ... guidelines, not *ex cathedra* pronouncements decreed by a presbyterian oligarchy or an episcopacy.

"The suffering of Christ in his body, as formulated in the Grebel letter, or the refusal by Jesus to be a lord in the ordinary sense in his society when he was asked to do so: those are the two sides of our model. That model applied to us, and that's all we need. There aren't many more ideas that we could find if we dug around more in the texts than those.

"Of course there are the teachings of Jesus, like 'resist not evil'; and there was the quotation from Luke 22, 'the kings of the world lord it over them, and you shouldn't do that.' But these teachings that we could call 'ethical,' are reflections of the model of Jesus in his refusal to exercise violence and in his suffering violence. That is the model for our presence in the world. That base of the Anabaptist nonresistant position didn't change down through the centuries. ... The Schleitheim position finally became dominant because all the other positions filtered away: but that took a while" (*Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, 1983, 189).

The question may now be raised: was Schleitheim binding for all Anabaptist groups of the day, and—equally important—of today? Once again, a quote from Yoder:

"Schleitheim thus represents a turn in the total identity of Anabaptism, as a centering process within the wider stream, in which the restatement of their pacifism is a coherent center, not an isolated element. In the internal conversation of Anabaptism we now have for the first time a point of crystallization around which it will be possible for the movement to work at its unity. It can never have the unity of the state synod or of an episcopacy, but it can begin now to have the unity of intervisitation and common positions on basic questions. This unity will radiate out from the event of Schleitheim but only very slowly and never coercively" (*Christian Attitudes*, 192).

The clue, here, is "never coercively."

Shortly after the Schleitheim meeting, Sattler was captured. From prison he wrote to the congregation at Horb, acknowledging the authority of the congregation to implement the Schleitheim agreement and to amend it as necessary: "Be mindful of our meeting and what was decided there and follow its precepts carefully. And if something has been forgotten, pray the Lord for understanding" (Leonard Gross, *Golden Apples in Silver Bowls*, 51).

> Leaders gathered at Schleitheim had seen themselves as comprising a synod, hoping that all Anabaptist congregations would hold to their precepts persistently and unswervingly. … Yet … every congregation would digest the seven points from the standpoint of the local, congregational context

This understanding of how the Schleitheim Confession should be carried out is instructive. Those leaders gathered at Schleitheim had seen themselves as comprising a synod, hoping that all Anabaptist congregations would hold to their precepts persistently and unswervingly. True, the synodal statement of Schleitheim also stood for all Swiss Anabaptists as their confession of faith. It incorporated the ideas of the earliest Anabaptists: Grebel, Mantz, Castelberger and Blaurock. Yet, significantly, it was now up to the congregation to work through and implement the Confession, whereby each and every congregation would digest the seven points from the standpoint of the local, congregational context—even augmenting the points in ways that would be found useful for that specific congregation.

Sattler also asked the Horb congregation to test his own views: "Dear fellow believers, note whether what I am writing to you is of the Lord, and if it is, take care to walk accordingly" (Gross, *Golden Apples*, 48).

The Upshot. The implications of all this suggest that each Mennonite congregation is ultimately called to be the "ekklésia"—called into being by Jesus himself. We send representatives to our area conference and denominational conventions, participate there with all the other representatives, come to agreement on central issues and return to our "ekklésia," where we take seriously denominational resolutions and confessions, interpreting them in the light of our own Spirit-led congregational context.

Convention resolutions and confessions are thus guidelines, not *ex cathedra* pronouncements decreed by a presbyterian oligarchy or an episcopacy. This is true even for Schleitheim, our first confession of faith. By 1560, the Schleitheim Confession was translated into Dutch and republished in 1565, showing that it had become part and parcel of Dutch Mennonitism. It is also foundational within the Hutterian tradition.

Consequently, for Anabaptist-Mennonites, the common primary positions on basic New Testament questions revolve around the Seven Articles of Schleitheim. Harold S. Bender in effect summarized these in his Anabaptist Vision: individual disciples following Jesus, who gather and thus become the "ekklésia," the body of Christ, whose mission is to reflect in their common life together the peaceable kingdom of Christ and to witness to it near and far.

If these three points are indeed the primary New Testament themes—our core, our very foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11)—on what it means to be New Testament Christian, both individually and corporately, then all else is secondary, where we will need to accept divergent answers as discerned within differing congregational settings.—*Leonard Gross, executive director emeritus of the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA, lives in Goshen, Ind.*

Deb King, MBA student, Gift & Thrift Shops, Inc., general manager.

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WORKERS

Bender, Robert, was licensed as interim lead pastor at Old Road Mennonite Church, Gap, Pa., on Feb. 5.

Mellinger, Laurie, was licensed as academic dean of Evangelical Seminary at Mountville Mennonite Church, Mountville, Pa., on Feb. 12.

Miller, Daniel L., was ordained as associate pastor at New Life Mennonite Church, Ellicot City, Md., on Jan. 29.

Rintelman, Dale D., was ordained as lead pastor at Agape Fellowship, Williamsport, Pa., on Feb. 12.

Yost, Rhoda, was ordained as lead pastor at Riversedge, Lancaster, Pa., on Jan. 29.

OBITUARIES

Albrecht, Mildred Stucky, 90, Marion, S.D., died Feb. 16. Spouse: Walter J. Albrecht (deceased). Parents: John J. and Lydia Ries Stucky. Children: Steve, James, Patricia Albrecht; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 21 at Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, Marion.

Beckler, Ethel Mae, 85, Glendale, Ariz., died Feb. 4. Parents: Edward and Fanny Roth Beckler. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Sunnyslope Mennonite Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

Bender, Lois Pauline Gingerich, 90, Kalona, Iowa, died Feb. 6. Spouse: Wallace P. Bender (deceased). Parents: Amos J. and Nannie Yoder Gingerich. Children: Nancy Swartzendruber, Ruth Anne Bankston, Richard; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

Bonham, Catherine Keathley, 87, Kalispell, Mont., died Feb. 1. Spouse: Robert Bonham. Parents: W. H. and Bertha Harwell Keathley. Children: Rusty, Cathy Brenneman, Thomas; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 4 at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell.

Brubacher, Ada, 104, Cambridge, Ontario, died Feb. 15. Parents: Menno M. and Almeta Good Brubacher. Funeral: Feb. 25 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

Burkholder, Elvin, 83, Dalton, Ohio, died Feb. 28. Spouse: Ada Zuercher Burkholder (deceased). Parents: Raymond and Esta Kornhaus Burkholder. Children: Luella Steiner, Glenn, Milan; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 3 at Martins Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio.

Davidhizar, Henry M., 99, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 28. Spouse: Amanda Schwietert Davidhizar. Parents: Enos L. and Martha Beutler Davidhizar. Children: Ronald, Lavern, Enos, Roberta Rexroth, Donald; nine grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 2 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

Derstine, Linda Bishop, 63, Perkasie, Pa., died Feb. 24. Spouse: Mark D. Derstine (deceased). Parents: Gilbert H. and June Heuckeroth Bishop. Children: Christopher M., Jeffrey A., Michael S.; seven grandchildren. Funeral: March 3 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Diehl, Billie Joan, 59, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 17. Parents: William and Alice Cassel Diehl. Funeral: Feb. 21 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Frank, Elizabeth A., 82, Lititz, Pa., died Feb. 6. Parents: Christian W. and Mae Rohrer Frank. Funeral: Feb. 10 at Landis Homes, East Bethany Chapel, Lititz.

Gering, William M., 89, Mishawaka, Ind., died Feb. 8. Spouse: Lucille Peters Gering. Parents: Joe and Caroline Preheim Gering. Children: Caroline Gering Breslin, Jeffrey; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 18 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Gingrich, Dr. Ronald Gordon, 69, and **Lois May Gingrich**, 68, Bright, Ontario, passed away unexpectedly at their home on Jan. 2. Dearly missed and survived by their son Jeffrey and his wife Anita Volikis, daughter Meredith Gingrich and her husband Chris Vermaat. Exceptional and proud grandparents of Gillian and Daniel Vermaat. Survived by Ron's mother Mary Shantz, brothers David and Raymond and the Shantz family. Also survived by Lois' sisters Gale, Linda, Glenna and sister-in-law Alma. Memorial service: Jan. 8 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, Ontario.

Goerzen, Alice Virginia Reimer, 84, Goessel, Kan., died Jan. 29. Spouse: Milton H. Goerzen (deceased). Parents: Jacob C. and Agnes Unruh Reimer. Children: Larry, Jennifer Flamin, Michael, Shelley Buller; 10 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 2 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

Halteman, Ada N., 90, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 8. Parents: John Schatz Halteman and Mary Cassel Nice Halteman. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Hamm, Helen Falk, 72, Altona, Manitoba, died Jan. 27. Spouse: Walter Hamm. Parents: Cornelius C. and Margaret Wiebe Falk. Children: Shauna, Ralph; four grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 2 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

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Hildebrand, Dorothy "Dora," 86, Altona, Manitoba, died Jan. 28. Parents: Henry H. and Aganetha Schellenberg Hildebrand. Funeral: Jan. 31 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Hunsberger, Earl H., Jr., 92, Davidsville, Pa., died Nov. 17, 2011, of pneumonia and Parkinson's disease. Spouse: Ruth Yoder Hunsberger. Spouse: Lydia Detweiler Hunsberger (deceased). Parents: Earl H., Sr., and Estella Detweiler Hunsberger. Children: Kathy Histand, Phyllis Oswald, Mary Lou Oswald, Juanita Yoder, William Hunsberger, Ruth Ann Moyer, Daniel Hunsberger, Greg Jones; 36 grandchildren; 52 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 20 at Kaufman Mennonite Church, Davidsville.

Janzen, Laura Balzer, 92, North Newton, Kan., died March 7. Spouse: Henry Janzen. Parents: Isaac and Emma Harms Balzer. Children: Sandra Lanzrath, Susan Shelley; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 10 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

Kauffman, Verda Pauline Lambright, 90, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 22, 2011. Spouse: J. Howard Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Fred and Mabel Lambright. Children: Lois, Ruth Shantz, Alice Hofheimer, Carol Poling; nine grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Liechty, Ruth E. Yoder, 89, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 13. Spouse: John H. Liechty (deceased). Parents: Allen and Sophia Ummel Yoder. Children: Bonnie King, John Allen, Daniel; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 18 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Martin, Ervin L., 82, Kitchener, Ontario, died Dec. 21, 20122. Spouse: Beatrice Martin (deceased). Parents: Anson and Lydia Martin. Children: Lois Pryse, Phyllis Martin-Neufeld, Linda Martin, Elizabeth MacPherson, Christy Hoffman; 10 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 25 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Martin, Ruth, 94, Columbiana, Ohio, died Feb. 2. Parents: John and Merta Ziegler Martin. Memorial service: Feb. 16 at Midway Mennonite Church, Columbiana, Ohio.

Miller, Donovan J., 71, Indianapolis, Ind., died Feb. 2. Spouse: Barbara A. Miller. Parents: Samuel E. and Rachel E. Rheinheimer Miller. Children: J. Vaughn, Shawndra B. Miller; two grandchildren. Memorial service: Feb. 5 at First Mennonite Church, Indianapolis.

Mumaw, Harvey David, 93, Sarasota, Fla., died March 5. Spouse: Mary E. Brubaker Mumaw (deceased). Parents: Adam H. and Clara B. Zook Mumaw. Children: Kay Schlabach, Kathy Gerber; six grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 5 at Bay Shore Mennonite Church, Sarasota. Second service: March 12 at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio.

Murray, Julie Lynn Garner, 46, Wellman, Iowa, died Feb. 4, from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Mickey Ken Murray (deceased). Parents: Richard and Gayle Lassiter Garner. Children: Brittany, Nicole, Chase, Jordan. Funeral: Feb. 11 at Mid-Prairie High School, Wellman.

Murray, Mickey Ken, 47, Wellman, Iowa, died Feb. 4, from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Julie Lynn Garner Murray (deceased). Parents: Vaughn and Betty Harris Murray. Children: Brittany, Nicole, Chase, Jordan. Funeral: Feb. 11 at Mid-Prairie High School, Wellman.

Neufeld, Helen Ann Regier, 82, Inman, Kan., died Feb. 10. Spouse: Walter D. Neufeld. Parents: Edward F. and Helena Neufeld Regier. Children: Steve, Kathy Jones, Laurie Glenn; nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 14 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Quiring, Mildred, 92, Hesston, Kan., died Feb. 24. Spouse: Paul D. Quiring. Children: Gloria Breit, Margaret Wester, Dwight; six grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 27 at Schowalter Villa Chapel, Hesston.

Reber, Barbara K. Bender, 86, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 31. Spouse: Don D. Reber. Parents: David and Elizabeth Bender. Children: Karen Sue Senft, Beth Ann Wenger, Mary Kay Hostetler, Carol Jean Brundege, Jon Bardon Reber; 11 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Schmid, Mary Esther Zook, 94, Orrville, Ohio, died Feb. 9. Spouse: Walter Schmid (deceased). Parents: Simon P. and Mary Ann Zook. Children: Barbara Fridley, Steve, John, Mary Kathryn Miller; 11 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 11 at Orrville Mennonite Church.

Schwindt, Sylvia Grace Weber, 91, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Nov. 26, 2011. Spouse: Homer Schwindt. Parents: Allen and Laura Weber. Children: Larry Schwindt, Paul Quenneville. Funeral: Dec. 2 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Sherer, Kathryn Summers, 79, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 28 of pulmonary fibrosis. Spouse: Lon Sherer. Parents: Raymond and Edna Cook Summers. Children: Mark, Karen Stoltzfus, Michael; four grandchildren. Funeral: March 8 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Short, Mary Nafziger Kauffman, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 26. Spouse: Virgil Short (deceased). Spouse: Lawrence Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Amanda Schmucker Nafziger. Children: Carol Beck, Elaine Rupp; three grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Step-children: Mary Ann Yoder, Joe Short, Ned Short, Tim Short; eight grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Slabaugh, Grace I. Martin, 97, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 22. Spouse: Paul T. Slabaugh (deceased). Parents: Amos and Amelia Egli Martin. Children: Phil, Don, Steve, Jane Garber; eight grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 27 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

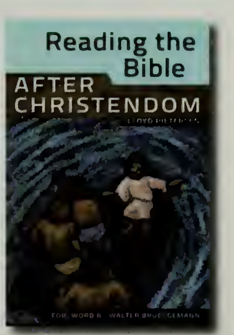
Souder, Joyce K. Alderfer, 84, Franconia Township, Pa., died Feb. 10. Spouse: Wilmer B. Souder, Jr. (deceased). Parents: Jacob L. and Valeria Kulp Alderfer. Children: W. Blaine, Joyce A. Landis, Janis B. Derstine, Nancy J. Souder; nine grandchildren; 17 great grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 14 at Williams-Bergey-Koffel Funeral Home, Telford, Pa.

Stuckey, Kathryn Elizabeth Beck, 85, Stryker, Ohio, died Dec, 27, 2011. Spouse: LaMar Stuckey (deceased). Parents: Ervin and Ester Lederman Beck. Children: Reginald, Bruce; five grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 30 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker.

Swartzendruber, Stanley, 91, Kalona, Iowa, died Feb. 8. Spouse: Edna Rich Swartzendruber (deceased). Parents: Lewis and Mabel Swartzendruber. Children: Larry, Thelma Goszleth, June Taylor, David, Tony, Bernie, Becky Hochstedler, Anne Williams; 24 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 12 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Troyer, Christian Ira, 101, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 8. Spouse: Joella G. Murray Troyer (deceased). Parents: Jephtha S. and Ada Mae Yoder Troyer. Children: Philip, Sally Miller, Arthur; 12 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Yoder Culp Funeral Home, Goshen

Troyer, Dana Orion, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 25. Spouse: Mildred Yoder Troyer. Spouse: Verna Burkholder Troyer (deceased). Parents: George C. and Kathryn Sommers Troyer. Children: Don, Robert, John; three grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 25 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.



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Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Eerdmans, 2012, $55) offers a comprehensive and critical examination of penal substitution, the most widely accepted evangelical Protestant theory of atonement, and presents a biblically grounded, theologically orthodox alternative.

Go to Church, Change the World: Christian Community as Calling by Gerald J. Mast (Herald Press, 2012, $13.99) asserts that "going to church"—not just personal virtue or ethics—is at the heart of Christian vocation. Drawing on Anabaptist life and conviction, the book outlines Christ's call to all believers to be the church, whether gathered for worship or scattered for service.

Forming Christian Habits in Post Christendom: The Legacy of Alan and Eleanor Kreider, edited by James R. Krabill and Stuart Murray (Herald Press, 2011, $22.99), brings together contributors, all affected by the Kreiders' ministry, who form a global, multi-voiced choir. The writers celebrate the lifelong contribution the Kreiders have made to forming the Christian habits necessary for living faithfully in the world where Christendom is unraveling.

After We're Gone: A Christian Perspective on Estate and Life Planning for Families that Include a Dependent Member with a Disability by Duane Ruth-Heffelbower (Herald Press, 2012, $8.99) introduces options and resources for the Christian family and faith community as they interact with the legal system to make provisions for the ongoing care of loved ones with disabilities. This is a thorough revision of the 1987 edition.

Supportive Care in the Congregation: Providing a Congregational Network of Care for Persons with Significant Disabilities by Dean Preheim-Bartel, Aldred Neufeldt, Paul Leichty and Christine Guth (Herald Press, 2012, $8.99) is thoroughly revised and updated from a previous edition. An expanded chapter on theology looks at the Anabaptist roots of the book's vision. Three new chapters present complementary ministries and movements that have emerged since the book's first edition.

Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions by Arthur Boers (Brazos Press, 2012, $17.99) offers a critical look at the isolating effects of modern life that have eroded the centralizing, focusing activities that people used to do together. It suggests ways to make our life healthier and more rewarding by presenting specific individual and communal practices that help us focus on what really matters. These practices—such as shared meals, gardening, hospitality, walking, prayer and reading aloud—bring our lives into focus and build community.

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If you enjoyed **Katelyn's Affection** by Kirsten L. Klassen (Herald Press, 2004), check out the sequel, **Katelyn's Friendship**. In this contemporary novel, Katelyn's best friend makes a decision Katelyn struggles to accept. Available at Amazon.com for only $11.99.

Internships at **Spruce Lake**, a Christian retreat/camp ministry in northeastern Pa.: (1) general ministry, (2) food service, (3) media specialist, (4) maintenance/water/grounds. Information: call Sarah Kauffman, 570-369-3982, or email intern2012@sprucelake.org, or open Internships button at www.sprucelake.org .

Assembly Mennonite Church, a congregation in Goshen, Ind., that is part of both Indiana-Michigan and Central District conferences, seeks a ***pastor*** (.65 FTE) to serve with two other pastors in a team ministry. We are seeking a pastor and spiritual leader who has a strong interest in collaborative ministry, calling forth the gifts of others, the gospel work of reconciliation/peace/justice and community building. We are looking for someone with the heart and skills for pastoral care as well as a passion for worship, willing to preach eight to 12 times a year. We value adaptability and are especially interested in someone with a minimum of five years of experience in pastoral leadership. Commitment to Anabaptist theology is important, and we prefer candidates with an M.Div. degree and expect a completed Ministerial Leadership Information form. Interested candidates may contact the chair of the Search Committee at maryyoderholsopple@gmail.com or 574-875-6831.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. In the Books section type the author's name. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

Eastern Mennonite University seeks applicants for the position of ***head golf coach***. Skills required include recruiting, relational skills with college students, exceptional communication skills and the ability to teach fundamental and advanced golf skills. The position is for the establishment of the golf program for 2012-2013, for both men's and women's teams. Position will start in spring of 2012 to begin recruiting, scheduling and organizing. He/she must be committed to the values and mission of the university and direct the program in adherence to the rules and regulations of the Old Dominion Athletic Conference and Division III of the NCAA. Submit application, resume and three references to: hr@emu.edu. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

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Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) seeks qualified applicants for the position of ***associate director of seminary development, admissions, and university church relations***. The position will strengthen the financial future of Eastern Mennonite University/Seminary by focusing on potential donors who have a specific interest in the Seminary. The associate director will represent EMU at annual constituent conferences and serving pastors. Responsibilities include working closely with the admissions contacts for Eastern Mennonite Seminary at Mennonite and Methodist conference gatherings, colleges and universities and Mennonite Church USA Assembly. Bachelor's degree required. Applicant must be committed to EMU/Seminary's mission and vision and have a passion for relationships and fundraising. Travel and some evening and weekend hours are required. Send letter of application, resume and three references to: Human Resources, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, fax 540-432-4744. hr@emu.edu. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EMU is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Waiting to be normal

Sharon Kniss is director of Our Community Place in Harrisonburg, Va.

Friends in the mental health field assure me that "normal" is unreal and often an unhelpful construct. What is normal?

- In the United States, it's still relatively normal for people to attend church regularly. In the United Kingdom, only 15 percent of the population attends church once a month or more.
- I associate frequently with a community of people where few have driver's licenses due to unpaid child support, court fines, convictions or disability. I've been a part of this community long enough that it no longer feels normal that people around me will have a driver's license. I've twice asked middle-class, educated, resourced individuals whether they had a driver's license, once causing offense before I explained my sense of normal.
- I work with two different nonprofits who operate with different understandings of normal as to paid salaries. The same position is paid at 40 percent higher salary at one nonprofit than the other. Within each organization, the salary is considered normal.

We perpetuate damaging self-images when we label things and people normal.

Normal is contextual. Normal in one arena is not necessarily normal elsewhere. Yet the above are also fairly benign examples of normalcy. What about definitions of normalcy in sexuality and intimate relationships, in spirituality, in families, in emotions and beliefs?

I'm a single woman in my late 20s. Though I'm told this is becoming more normal nationally, in a small town in the United States, it feels strikingly unusual. Most of my peers are married and with kids. However, on a recent trip to London (where I lived for three years), any of my age-peers there who were married or with children would not be considered normal. I didn't feel there was something wrong with me in London, whereas I sometimes question my lack of normalcy when I'm in the United States.

We want to be normal. We ask our doctors, Is this normal? We ask our pastors and counselors, Is this normal? As we experience life and deal with the consequences of our circumstances and our choices, we want to be normal because the heart of being normal is the sense that I am OK.

Certainly there are times when feeling abnormal can be a trigger to noticing areas of weakness in our lives that need attention. And there are times, well-documented through nonconformist Mennonite tradition, where not being normal is a good thing. However, I'm thinking of the majority of time, when seeking to be normal is a desire to be accepted and validated, to be considered a person of worth. I'm thinking of the times when we think we're not normal, when we feel shame and a weakened sense of self.

We perpetuate damaging self-images when we label things and people normal. We compare ourselves to an arbitrary definition and feel shame when our actions or beliefs or circumstances don't feel normal. In seeking to be normal, we're seeking to be accepted, validated, loved and forgiven. On the surface it may appear to be chasing the Joneses. Underneath, however, the truth is more vulnerable.

Jesus set a clear example of welcome. He showed that each individual is loved by God. We see in countless examples in the Gospels that those who may be considered "abnormal" are told and shown that they—and by implication we—are OK. We see that all of us, despite whatever trajectory our life has taken, can be forgiven.

Wherever we may find ourselves striving to be "normal," let us stop the striving and remind ourselves that we start and end from a place of unconditional love from God. No matter what. Let's escape the trap that keeps us comparing against each other, seeking what we already have been given from God—acceptance, validation, love and forgiveness. But let's not only accept this as a truth for ourselves but for our sisters, brothers, neighbors. Despite our best intentions, we tell others that they aren't normal—sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly. We must stop the labeling and seek to love, welcome, accept and forgive. We grow when we're in a place of love and support. We wither when we feel shamed and alone.

I'm learning that wanting to be normal will ultimately end in disappointment. As much as I believe wanting to be normal is normal, it also leaves me wanting. TM

Is God in popular music?

When or if we think about popular music, we may not usually think about whether or how God is present in it or what it might have to say to us. But three new books help us do just that.

Broken Hallelujahs: Why Popular Music Matters to Those Seeking God by Christian Scharen (Brazos Press, 2011, $17.99) looks at "the paradoxical nature of human hope and despair, joy and suffering, and the ways God is revealed in the midst of it all—from various points of view, including Leonard Cohen, the blues and Scripture."

Scharen quotes a line from a Cohen song that reads, "there is a crack in everything / that's how the light gets in." Music often reveals the cracks in life, the sorrows we experience, but also hints at light, at redemption.

As the Psalms often express both the sorrows and the joys of the Psalmist, so popular music can serve that function. Thomas Dorsey, who wrote "Precious Lord," saw "a profound connection between the blues and church, rooted as they both are in what it means to be human, to cry out in the depths of our being in response to the circumstances of life."

At the root of all good art, including music, is honesty. Scharen quotes Bono of U2: "The most important element in painting a picture, writing a song, making a movie, whatever, is that it is *truthful*, a version of the truth as you see it."

Unfortunately, many Christians use what Scharen calls "checklist Christianity," a constricted imagination that simply counts the number of "bad words" in a song or tries to measure it against Christian doctrine.

Scharen calls us to first give ourselves to the song and let it speak to us. He quotes C.S. Lewis, who wrote that we "are so busy doing things with the work [of art] that we give it too little chance to work on us. Thus increasingly we meet only ourselves."

Two other recent books follow similar themes while exploring other artists. In *Hip-Hop Redemption: Finding God in the Rhythm and the Rhyme* (BakerAcademic, 2011, $17.99), Ralph Basui Watkins explores the history and influence of hip-hop and asks how God is present in this music.

Kicking at the Darkness: Bruce Cockburn and the Christian Imagination by Brian J. Walsh (Brazos Press, 2011, $18.99) engage the work of the popular Canadian (and Christian) singer-songwriter and how entering the world of his songs "is so helpful in the shaping of … a Christian imagination."

Both authors also sound the theme of truthtelling in art. Walsh quotes Cockburn: "If you're an artist, you're immediately put in a position of opposition to mainstream society, because you are trying to tell the truth."

This also puts the artist in the role of a prophet. Watkins asks, "What if God is actually using hip-hop and its young artists to speak prophetically to the church and call her to task?"

"Prophets are visionaries who discern the times," writes Walsh. They, like many artists, describe what is happening and may speak judgment. As one Cockburn song says, "The trouble with normal / is it always gets worse."

But art can also be redemptive. Watkins writes, "The redemptive principle in hip-hop is rooted in the truth in the stories that artists tell as they resonate with both their own lived experience and that of their listeners."

All three authors emphasize listening to the music and let it speak before judging it. As we listen, it may reward us to also listen to the cries of people and for God's healing voice.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

FILM REVIEW

A Separation (PG-13), which won this year's Oscar for best foreign film, tells of a married couple faced with a difficult decision—to improve the life of their child by moving to another country or to stay in Iran and look after a deteriorating parent who has Alzheimer's disease. They decide to separate and put off divorce. Their separation leads to a succession of events that disrupt several lives and show the painful consequences of our decisions.—*Gordon Houser*

DVD REVIEWS

A Better Life (PG-13) is the story of a gardener in East L.A. who struggles to keep his son away from gangs and immigration agents while trying to give his son the opportunities he never had. Though topical at first, the story becomes specific and moving as we learn what such a situation entails. Demián Bichir is outstanding as the father.—*gh*

The Interrupters (unrated) tells the moving and surprising stories of three Violence Interrupters who try to protect their Chicago communities from the violence they once employed. The candid scenes of these courageous and gifted mediators interacting with people lured by anger to retaliate for violence done to them is remarkable. Though confusing at first, the film soon draws you in.—*gh*

TV REVIEW

The Amish is a documentary shown on PBS's American Experience in February and available at pbs.org. Merging sometimes stunning photography (though not up close of the Amish) and interviews with scholars, including three Mennonites, the film clearly delineates Amish beliefs and history. It avoids the extremes of romanticizing or satirizing them but instead includes interviews that show the positive and negative aspects of the group. Overall, this is an excellent film that will be useful to those wanting to learn more.—*gh*

(Continued from page 5)

I commend Rempel's article as carefully nuanced counsel on the "emotionally laden" debate about "differences in belief and practice" regarding homosexuality. He identifies the essential relationship between the authority of the Bible and the leading of the Holy Spirit "in applying the old story to a new setting." Illustrating with other complex, contentious issues, he keeps focus on our mission, where "we risk a deeper understanding of evangelism and justice in the coming of the kingdom" and find "the path that aligns us with God's love."

There is a sexual culture in all societies—Christians will form their sexual culture in countercultural distinctiveness. Thus, our society's patterns of sexual expression ought not be the guide for the church; instead, biblical faith and the leading of the Holy Spirit must shape the beliefs and practices of our sexual ethics.—*Sheldon Burkhalter, Woodburn, Ore.*

God's abhorrent behavior?

Thanks to Steve Carpenter's "On Biblical Inerrancy" (Opinion, March). "Inerrancy" is a new description of what Christians should believe about the Bible. But it is old enough to make it worth looking at the fruit it has borne.

Historically, the inerrants have used interpretative schemes to make the Bible more authoritative than Jesus in how they think about government, war and enemies. This is not a small matter. It is helping decide the fate of the world, which faces, as Martin Luther King Jr. said, a clear choice between nonviolence and nonexistence. (Now watch the interpretative schemes rise up to refute this moral clarity.)

Carpenter mentions factual contradictions in Scripture, but he does not even get into the bigger issue of contradictory descriptions of God, which really drives people away from the church. Consider just one piece of that: efforts to explain morally abhorrent behavior on the part of God with the idea of "mystery" or "God is greater than us" are not persuasive. Mystery is not well used as a way to muddy the waters of good and evil, right and wrong.

If mystery is a good way to explain morally abhorrent behavior on the part of God, it will serve just as well to do the same for us. It is true we don't know everything about God. But then we don't know everything about anything. Having said that, we have no obligation to justify behavior on the part of God that we would condemn on the part of any human parent.

How did we get to this place where we are much more willing to attribute morally abhorrent behavior to God than to attribute mistaken ideas to some men whose ideas got included in the pages of what we have decided is Holy Scripture? However we may have gotten here, we have no duty to stay here forever—as thousands, no millions, of conscientious people looking at the church from the outside could tell you.—*John Stoner, Akron Pa.*

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Signposts: An alternative community

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!—Galatians 4:19 (TNIV)

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.—Romans 12:2 (TNIV)

Something is wrong with Christianity in America. Various recent surveys have shown that many people professing Christianity, even those who claim to be born again, have virtually the same attitudes and lifestyles as their non-Christian neighbors. Jesus must be embarrassed that such Christians carry his name.

The hard reality is that many of us do not reflect kingdom living—the Lordship of Christ—even in our own lives. I am compelled to agree with Ron Sider, who concluded that "evangelical Christians are as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered and sexually immoral as the world in general."

In his recent book, called *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*, Sider gives many concrete examples to show how contemporary Christians have compromised the faith they profess. Too many Christians in the United States think of themselves first as Americans and second as Christians. And lest we as Mennonites too quickly point fingers at our brothers and sisters who more readily carry the label Evangelical, we must admit that we too are conformed to the pattern of this world as expressed in mainstream American culture.

The missional church pursues a different path, seeking to follow Jesus in costly discipleship. The two verses cited above point to the Apostle Paul's interest in giving birth to an alternative society. Did you notice the not-so-subtle implication that the Galatian church needed to be born again? Even though Paul addresses them as children, he declares their need to be born anew in the image of Jesus Christ. And Paul's plea to the Romans points away from worldly assimilation toward transformation. This clearly points toward the need for the character trait and signpost below:

Missional character trait: The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death and resurrection of its Lord.

Signpost: In its corporate life and public witness, the church is consciously seeking to conform to its Lord instead of the multitude of cultures in which it finds itself.

Mennonite Church USA's Purposeful Plan asserts that "we dare not accept three myths at the core of prevailing American thought:

- Personal freedom and fulfillment is achieved by throwing off restraints and limitations, as symbolized by Hollywood.
- Military domination of the world is better than all available alternatives, as symbolized by the U.S. military industrial complex.
- Unfettered corporate capitalism, as symbolized by the excesses too common on Wall Street, is the best way for all of us to get by.

To stand against these fictions as a church, we must bear witness to the freedom and fulfillment we have found by binding ourselves to the way of Jesus, to communities of faith and to relationships of love and fidelity. We must ultimately place our security in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, rather than seeking to find our security in the power of empire. We must commit ourselves to the biblical principle of Jubilee alongside economic practices that serve the common good and create opportunities for working people and the poor.

In our current context, these are identity markers that will signify the saving power of our Lord. As we publicly embrace this kind of nonconformity, the seven priorities outlined in the Purposeful Plan will indeed do their work, making of us 'an effective sign, instrument and foretaste of God's kingdom.'"

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

Many of us do not reflect kingdom living—the Lordship of Christ--even in our own personal lives.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Good Friday worship

Everett J. Thomas

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God."—Hebrews 10:12

Sacrifice is a word oddly out of place in our culture. But it appears more than 200 times in the Bible. The writer of Hebrews, in that distinctly Jewish book, describes Jesus' death on the cross as a single sacrifice that removes sins "for all time."

Maybe it would make more sense to us if we substituted the word "worship" for "sacrifice." We get closest to this understanding when we sing about "the sacrifice of praise."

In the religious community of Jesus' day, central elements of each worship service were the sacrifices offered by priests as expressions of adoration for God. We often get hung up on the expiation dynamic of sacrifices—the sacrificial offering in exchange for forgiveness of sins. But sacrifices were more than transactions. Originally, they were also radical acts of worship.

Imagine what God was experiencing during Jesus' crucifixion and death.

God tested Abraham's faith in Genesis 22 by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. The text says Abraham told his servants he and Isaac would go by themselves to "worship" God. The act of worship Abraham expected was sacrificing Isaac. Nothing in the story suggests Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac because of Abraham's sins.

On Good Friday, God sacrifices his "only begotten son" because he loves us that much. Calvary was an act of God sacrificing for—worshipping all—humankind. Abraham was willing to give up what mattered most to him—biological posterity—but God intervened. However, there was no such intervention to save God from sacrificing his only begotten son.

Our mortality is the ultimate end of our bodies. All humans die. It was with this most extreme of experiences that God chose to demonstrate his love for us. But God also demonstrated that he is more powerful than mortal death. This is why we know that everyone who believes that Jesus was God's son may have eternal life.

On Good Friday, I try to imagine what God the Father was experiencing during Jesus' crucifixion and death. This is not to discount the horrendous torture and pain Jesus suffered. But as a parent, I cannot comprehend the agony of watching my child being tortured and then dying a slow death when I was powerful enough to save him or her.

God did this for us, however.

If there is a child in your life who is very special to you, imagine whether there is anything you love enough to allow such personal devastation for that child. Then turn it around and imagine God loving us so much that he permitted this awfulness in order to demonstrate—to prove—how much he loves us and all people who ever lived, are living now and will live in the future.

This is how much God "so loved the world" on Good Friday.—*ejt*

About that disclaimer box

Occasionally readers express their disappointment regarding the disclaimer on page 31 (Opinion page). It says, "The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc." The disclaimer is also in the masthead on page 4 and pertains to all content in the magazine. We repeat it on the Opinion page because of the wide-ranging—sometimes strident—opinions expressed there. It is as a way to treat each person's opinion the same in this "forum for the voices of Mennonite Church USA."—*ejt*

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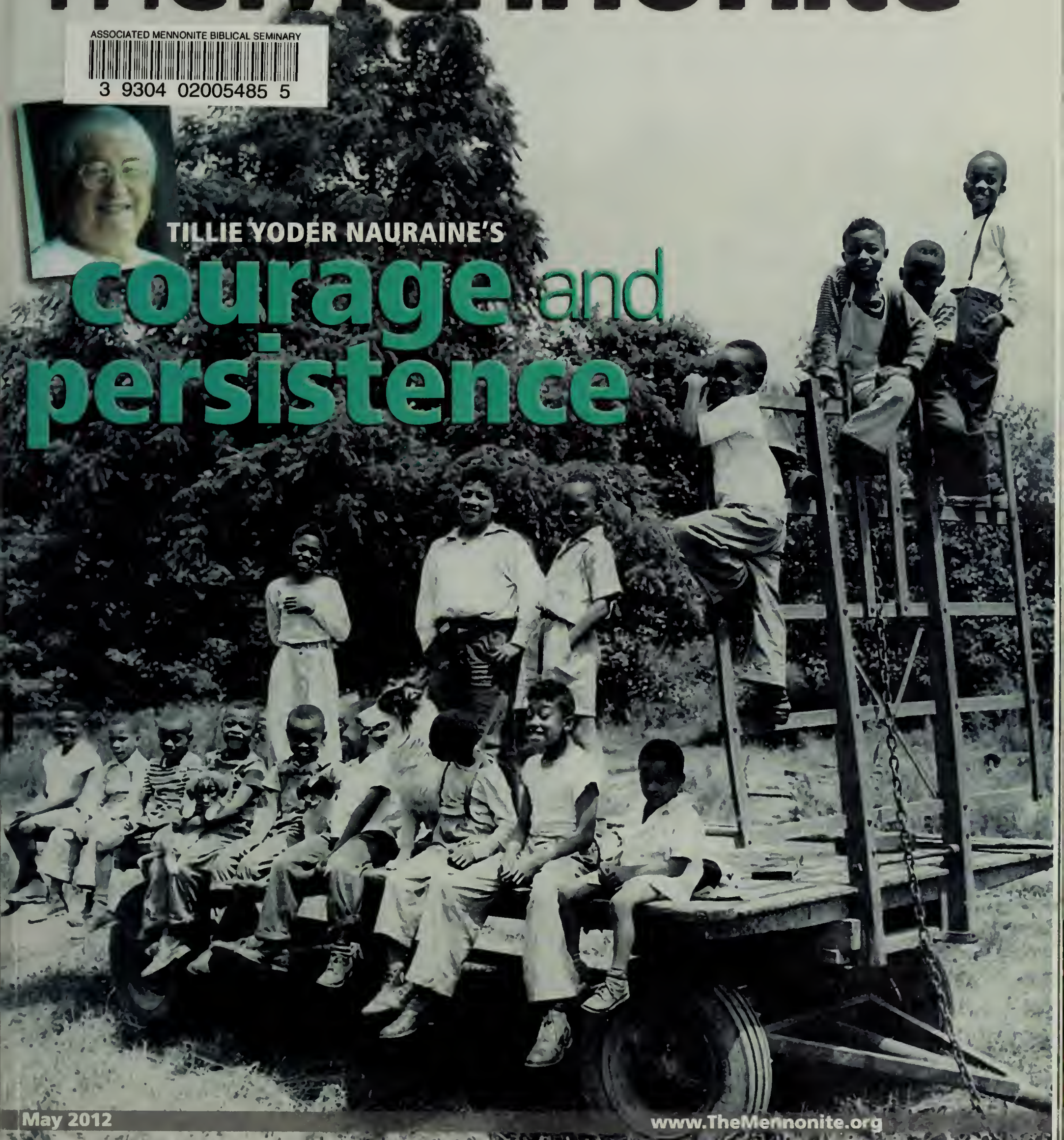

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courage and persistence

May 2012

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- Paraguayan Mennonites enter politics
- If I were planting a church today
- Handling divorce
- Hungry for a saner world
- Lessons from a tragedy

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TheMennonite May 2012 | Volume 15, Number 5

CONTENTS

12 Courage and persistence
—Anna Groff with Serena Townsend

16 If I were planting a church today
—Ryan Ahlgrim

20 Church growth led by the Spirit
—Roland Kuhl

24 Who gets the church when a couple divorces
—Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

28 Handling divorce
—Eric Litwiller

32 Joint board meeting addresses 'martyr complex'
—Anna Groff

34 Volunteers extend reach of MC USA archives
—Rich Preheim

35 Southern ministry on front lines of changes
—Wil LaVeist

37 Commissioning launches MCC's new purpose
—Linda Espenshade

38 Peace after a decade of fighting
—Angela J. Lederach

40 Indigenous Panamanians killed in land conflict
—Ron Rempel

40 Vietnamese pastor sentenced to prison
—Luke S. Martin

43 500 Mennonites, Amish join Christian cruise
—Serena Townsend

44 Naming what unites us—Mark Thiessen Nation

ON THE COVER: Photos from the Mennonite Church USA Historical Archives

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
47 For the Record
51 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

TheMennonite
May 2012 | Volume 15, Number 5

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POSTMASTER send address changes to:
The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1819
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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Mennonites and the Holocaust

I read Gerhard Rempel's article, "Mennonites and the Holocaust" (March). It was an emotional account of Mennonite atrocities prior to and during World War II. I was aware that there were Mennonites in the German army during the war and that some served in the officer ranks. I did not know it was as bad as Rempel's article describes it. I have one question: Is Mennonite Church USA planning a formal apology to the Israelis for those atrocities? Should Mennonite Church USA take steps of apology to Israel similar to the recent Lutheran apology to the Mennonites? Maybe this is already in the plans. I hope so.—*John T. Kreider, Newport News, Va.*

I found the account of Mennonites and the Holocaust hugely unsettling. Never in my limited reading of Mennonite history have I encountered accounts of active Mennonite participation in the enslavement and killing of Jewish people. It sadly confirms for me the adage that the line between good and evil runs through the heart of each of us.

Over recent years global Mennonites have received collective confessions from Lutherans and Catholics who took part in persecution of Anabaptists centuries ago. What now do we have to confess collectively to our Jewish brothers and sisters?

Even today, most of us Mennonites place, without protest, money into the hands of the military to slaughter combatants and innocents in the remote reaches of Afghanistan and Pakistan by robot airplanes.

Gerhard Rempel has had the courage to uncover these most wrenching facts and to ask the hard questions of himself and of our Mennonite family. I believe we are called to a more radical place of confession, seeking reconciliation and a more thorough disentangling ourselves from feeding our nation's impulse to kill our perceived enemies. —*Earl Martin, Harrisonburg, Va.*

U.S. soldier killed 16 Afghans

In March, we heard about another atrocity in the long list of atrocities committed against Jesus Christ's brothers and sisters in Afghanistan.

An American soldier blew away the lives of 16 civilians in Afghanistan. He just gunned them down, mostly children, in the dead of night. The next morning, Mr. Samad, 60, walked into his mud-walled dwelling and found 11 relatives, mostly children, sprawled in all directions, stabbed and burned, deceased.

Christopher Cooper wrote a moving article entitled, "I don't want to see their faces, I don't want to hear them scream," a commentary on the attitude of many Americans.

It would be good if we would look at their pictures—both those of the murdered and those of the bereaved—and let those faces be bored into our consciousness and then let our consciences tell us what we should do about this atrocity and all the other atrocities that our tax dollars have financed during our lifetimes.

Here are the names of the dead:
Mohamed Dawood, son of Abdullah
Khudaydad, son of Mohamed Juma
Nazar Mohamed
Payendo
Robeena
Shatarina, daughter of Sultan Mohammed
Zahra, daughter of Abdul Hamid

Nazia, daughter of Dost Mohamed
Masooma, daughter of Mohamed Wazir
Farina, daughter of Mohamed Wazir
Palwasha, daughter of Mohamed Wazir
Nabia, daughter of Mohamed Wazir
Esmatullah, daughter of Mohamed Wazir
Faizullah, son of Mohamed Wazir
Essa Mohamed, son of Mohamed Hussain
Akbar Mohamed, son of Murrad Ali.

Here are the names of the wounded:

Haji Mohamed Naim, son of Hazi Sakhawat
Mohamed Sediq, son of Mohamed Naim
Parween
Rafiullah
Zardana.

—Daniel and Marie Riehl, Lititz, Pa.

On biblical inerrancy

Thanks for having the courage to publish Steve Carpenter's Opinion piece "On Biblical Inerrancy" (March). It dovetailed nicely with Ervin Stutzman's "Signposts: Committed to the Scriptures" (March).

Many people in the Mennonite church have been more deeply influenced by American evangelicalism and the biblicism it embraces than by a distinctly Anabaptist approach to reading, discerning and applying the truth of the Scriptures in community.

In *The Bible Made Impossible*, Christian Smith points out that biblicism—or the kind of biblical inerrancy Carpenter is responding to—is impossible by its own standards. While it is affirmed by most all evangelicals, it collapses under its own weight. The "mental gymnastics" required to make sense of Evangelical biblicism undermines the very goal of claiming such inerrancy in the first place. In my experience, it causes many to think the Bible as a whole is nonsense. I have always been grateful that *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* does not use the word inerrant in the article concerning the Scriptures.*—Michael Danner, Metamora, Ill.*

Need election boycott

Seven years ago, early in the second term of President George W. Bush, Goshen (Ind.) College professor John Roth called on U.S. Mennonites to "commit themselves to a five-year sabbatical from affiliations with any political party."

In a statement released by the college, Roth described "a new posture of aggressive political activism" among Mennonites. Notwithstanding the historic skepticism Mennonites have held toward politics, during the 2004 election campaign, Roth said, "Mennonites seemed to have been co-opted by the polarized rhetoric of radio talk show hosts, direct mail campaigns, polemical ads and website bloggers."

At the time, I was unenthusiastic about Roth's proposal, partly because I had taken time off work the previous fall to campaign door-to-door for John Kerry. That was a first for me. In other ways I also fit the profile Roth lamented.

My second objection was that a sabbatical from politics would heighten our inclination to seek purity as our highest calling. This tendency often has removed our voice from public life—a result I find difficult to reconcile with the biblical emphasis on witness.

Now, surrounded by the drama and spectacle of another national election, I feel different. It's time to implement Roth's proposal with a boycott on voting in the 2012 national election. To ensure our action is understood to reflect concern for public life and not only our own righteousness, it also is time we publicly proclaim the reason for our boycott: the failure of our political

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Tillie Yoder Nauraine grew up Amish. But her educational career unleashed a strong commitment to urban children in the 1950s. Her courage and persistence resulted in what is now Camp Luz in Ohio and Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland. A year ago, some of her friends asked us to tell Tillie's story. After months of research and writing, associate editor Anna Groff and intern Serena Townsend crafted our cover story (page 12).

An antiracism auditor has cautioned us about telling too many stories of white people helping people of color. So before launching the project, we asked Regina Shands Stoltzfus, who grew up in the Lee Heights church, whether we should tell Tillie's story. She agreed it should be told. She also reviewed several drafts of the article. Thanks, Regina.

"Who Gets the Church When a Couple Divorces" (page 24) is one of two articles addressing how the church can provide healing and hope to divorced members.

"Getting a divorce is bad," says Eric Litwiller (page 28), "but there are worse things than simply no longer being married."

In Leadership (page 30) we introduce another Mennonite Church USA staff member, Jason Boone. Boone says justice and peacemaking are like inhaling the love we find in Jesus and then exhaling that love into the world around us.

Joint board meetings and the Constituency Leaders Council convened in Elkhart County, Ind., April 12-14. The gathering culminated with a dedication service and ribbon-cutting ceremony for Mennonite Church USA's new office building in Elkhart. Our coverage of those events begins on page 32.

Finally, Mark Thiessen Nation offers a News Analysis (page 44) naming what unites.*—Editor*

Council approves $850,000 fund-raising goal for MWC Assembly 15 in 2015

LANCASTER, Pa.—Both the welcome anticipation and the challenges of hosting the next Mennonite World Conference Assembly were evident in the meeting of the National Advisory Council held here March 22-23.

The Council approved a unified fund-raising goal of $850,000 for the 16th Assembly, to be held July 21-26, 2015, in Harrisburg, Pa.. Council members represent the four inviting denominations: Mennonite Church USA, the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, the Brethren in Christ General Conference and the Conservative Mennonite Conference.

While most of the income in an assembly break-even budget of $2.8 million will come from registration fees, $400,000 will be required from fund-raising.

In response to concerns raised by the Young Anabaptist Network (YABs), the Council reaffirmed its commitment to do everything it can to make it possible for young adults from outside the United States to get visitor visas for the assembly. With this commitment, the YABs will not pursue the possibility of an alternate location for the 2015 Global Youth Summit.—*MWC*

Photo provided

100 years and counting

On April 15, relatives and friends of Bennet and Grace Geiser held a celebration for them. Grace, who turned 100 on April 11, and Bennet, who turned 100 in January, live in Orrville, Ohio. They have been married 77 years and are longtime members of Orrville Mennonite Church.—*Marie Harnish*

Longtime missionary dies at 88

ELKHART, Ind.—Longtime missionary Ruth Barbara Bauman, 88, died March 23, in Goshen, Ind.

Bauman was born Nov. 15, 1923, to Ella (Shoup) and Norman Bauman near Gettysburg, Pa. After graduating from Goshen College with an elementary education degree, she taught in the Leetonia (Ohio) schools. In 1968, she received a master's degree from Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pa.

In 1950, Bauman went to Ethiopia as a volunteer under the Mennonite Relief and Service Committee to teach in the Haile Salassie School for Girls. Two years later, she went to Mara Hills School in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), where she taught missionary and other expatriate children.

After her mother's death in 1970, Bauman went to Liberia with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

In 1975, she interrupted her ministry in Liberia to teach missionary children in Nazareth, Israel. After two years in Israel, Bauman returned to Liberia, where she taught for another six years.

In 1983, Ruth Bauman returned to Ohio, where she lived with and helped care for an elderly uncle while serving the Leetonia Mennonite Church as a teacher and elder.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Missionary to Tanzania dies at 97

LITITZ, Pa.—Grace Metzler Stauffer, founder of the Hilltop School for missionary children in Bukiroba, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), and wife of pioneer missionary Elam Stauffer, died March 22 at age 97. Elam died in 1981.

In 1946, Grace responded to a call from Eastern Mennonite Missions to serve in their first overseas field. After graduating from what is now Eastern Mennonite University (then Eastern Mennonite School) and teaching at a one-room school in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, Grace left for Tanganyika.

Hilltop School became Rosslyn Academy in Nairobi, Kenya. Today, Rosslyn enrolls 545 students from 42 countries in K-12 classes.

But after teaching at Hilltop for only three years, Grace left the classroom to marry Elam Stauffer, whose first wife Elizabeth had died of a heart condition two years earlier. Elam was leading the EMM team in Tanganyika and had been ordained as the first bishop of the emerging Tanganyika Mennonite Church.—*EMM*

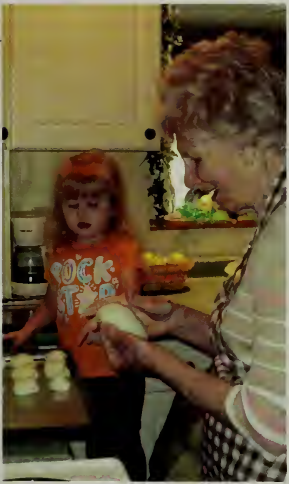
Church in Zimbabwe calls for prayer during drought

BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe—"On March 10, I met the deputy Minister of Agriculture who made a passionate plea that the church must do something to source food for Matabeleland South province; otherwise people might starve." Danisa Ndlovu, president of Mennonite World Conference, sent this note in mid-March, requesting prayer from the MWC family around the world. Ndlovu is from Bulawayo, just north of the affected province.

"We are also calling for prayers for rain," he added. "We have not had any significant inflows to dams that supply our city of Bulawayo."

Ndlovu also wrote: "The church calls upon those who can partner with us in purchasing food that can be distributed to needy communities. We think people can initiate projects within their communities that they can work on in exchange of food rations. However the elderly and sick will obviously not participate in the food-for-work projects but will, out of compassion, be provided with food." —*MWC*

Photo provided



Making zwieback

Helen Cornies of Leamington, Ontario, demonstrates her secrets to her youngest grandchild, Vivienne Fittler, about how to make the perfect zwieback during their weekly Saturday morning ritual.—*Jennifer Fittler*

Ten Thousand Villages names new CEO

AKRON, Pa.—Ten Thousand Villages has named Doug Dirks CEO to lead its network of more than 75 retail stores in the United States.

Dirks has been employed by Ten Thousand Villages for nearly two decades as marketing director, producer relations director and public relations director. He brings more than 25 years of experience in international relations, fair trade and senior leadership to the CEO position.

Dirks joined Ten Thousand Villages in 1985, when the organization was called Self-Help Crafts. In 1996, he and his family returned to his native Canada, where he was executive director for Ten Thousand Villages Canada. In 2002, Dirks rejoined Villages in the United States.—*Ten Thousand Villages*

Video series challenges Mennonite stereotypes

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—You don't need to have a certain kind of ethnic surname or eat specific foods to attend a Mennonite congregation. That's the message of a new video series Mennonite Church Canada is promoting.

The first video features Nick Spaling of Drayton (Ontario) Community Mennonite Fellowship enjoying a game of ball hockey with children from his hometown. Spaling is not a "cradle" Mennonite but relies on his church family to ground him in the midst of a public career as a left winger for the NHL's Nashville Predators.

The 60 second Spaling video (www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1) is the first in a series designed to include people from many walks of life and cultural backgrounds, says Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada's national church office. "Whether you have a public profile or not doesn't matter. What's important is that we want to profile people who have found a spiritual home in a Mennonite congregation but have not necessarily been born into it."—*Mennonite Church Canada*

The top 10 best-seller list since MennoMedia's founding last July:
1. *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*
2. *Adult Bible Study*
3. *Simply in Season*
4. *More-with-Less Cookbook*
5. *Who are the Mennonites?* (brochure)
6. *Sing the Story: Hymnal Supplement*
7. *Sing the Journey: Hymnal Supplement*
8. *Extending the Table*
9. *Martyrs Mirror*
10. *The Naked Anabaptist*

—*MennoMedia*

Eastern Mennonite Seminary teams up with United Methodist school

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) and Wesley Theological Seminary (WTS) are teaming up to provide more opportunities for United Methodist students at both schools.

"Eastern Mennonite Seminary seeks to be fully accountable to the United Methodist University Senate, which has asked that non-Methodist seminaries approved to teach Methodist students either enter in partnership with a Methodist seminary or hire a full-time Methodist faculty member," says Michael A. King, EMS dean.

EMS has done both. In two separate processes, EMS has entered into a partnership with WTS and hired David Evans, Ph.D., a United Methodist and WTS graduate, as assistant professor of history, mission, interfaith and intercultural studies.—*EMS*

Hidden in plain view

Cyneatha Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

At an invitation by Mennonite Church USA, I recently took a journey back through the civil rights era. The Sankofa Journey is designed for participants to retrace American history through the lens of the African-American experience. I must admit I was pretty sure I knew my history, so I began this process thinking I could assist and support non-African-Americans who were interested to learn more about African-American historical events. Even though I knew many of the stories and places, I was blessed to fill in gaps about our history that were unknown to me. And because of the journey, I learned more about my people through fresh, uplifting eyes.

On the journey I was most enlightened and empowered by a place called Slave Haven. It is a small, African Slave and Underground Railroad Museum that keeps the story of those early years in which Africans were unwillingly torn from their native land and relocated across the Atlantic Ocean to an unfamiliar land with no understanding of what was happening to them and why.

Slave Haven provides a context that explains what many people have been told about slavery that created a level of fear, anxiety, loss, shame and dissolution to Africans and their descendants. Slave Haven taught me about Africans who fought for their freedom, who did not give in to their captives and who pooled resources to survive.

When slave masters pushed their religion on the African slave, it was that very religion that freed them from their oppressor.

The curator of Slave Haven tells a rich story of the African people and their descendants as they were brought to America. Through this wonderful storytelling, I left with pride in who I am today, and I left with the fortitude of my ancestors. I realized that I came from a chosen people, blessed and carried by God.

When I returned home, I read a book that was encouraged by the curator, titled, *Hidden in Plain View: A Story of the African Quilts and the Underground Railroad*. (See also "The Underground Railroad Story in Quilts" in the January 2011 issue of *The Mennonite*). Through the story of quilts, the book touches on what it means to be African-American. Many Americans have heard the story of African-Americans through the word and spirit of the oppressor, but when you hear these same stories from the words and spirit of the oppressed, things look much different.

I come from a people who, like the Israelites, were in bondage for generations. Like the Israelites, the African slaves looked to God to lead them to the Promise Land. I come from a people God blessed with extraordinary talents. When slave masters took and withheld the basic necessities of life, my people created new ways of survival. When slave masters pushed their religion on the African slave, it was that very religion that freed them from their oppressor.

I come from a strong and powerful people, a people that from the beginning of their trials and tribulation never stopped or wavered from fighting for their freedom. The history books will tell of a passive, ignorant, lost people that were carried by their captives. But true history tells of a people who outsmarted their captives and never stopped fighting for liberation.

If God is on the side of the oppressed and marginalized, then the story of the African slave shows how only the love and grace of God kept my people for more than 400 years. The reality is that until all of us search for the truth hidden in plain view in our own lives, we cannot truly know God or ourselves. How much different would the plight of African Americans be if we were told stories of our intelligence, ingenuity, creativity and fortitude instead of stories of shame and loss? A history that shows we come from some of the best and brightest of God's creation.

God looked at us, God smiled and said, "It is good." If when you go and look in the mirror, you do not like what you see, I encourage you to do what I did: take a look back through your history. Reclaim those lost stories of strength and love. Seek to correct the misinformation that has been told for centuries and retell them with truth. Then return to the mirror and see the beauty of what God created and say, "it is good, and it is well with my soul." TM

Paraguayan Mennonites enter politics

In April 2011, Arnoldo Wiens, a 47-year old Paraguayan Mennonite pastor and executive director of several Mennonite-sponsored media enterprises, announced his candidacy to represent the Colorado Party in the upcoming national presidential race in 2013. Though his decision took some Mennonites in Paraguay by surprise, Wiens is a compelling candidate.

Fluent in Spanish, German and Guaraní, he had established himself in the national media as an award-winning journalist and widely recognized host of several popular radio and TV programs focusing on themes such as the Christian family and the natural beauty of Paraguay. In a political context notorious for its corruption, Wiens defined his candidacy as a Movement of Republican Values ("Movimiento Valor Republicano"). Not only was he a Mennonite pastor, his doctoral dissertation in theology, which appeared in book form in 1997, focused on "Christian Faith and the Challenge of Corruption in Latin America."

The Paraguayan electorate took note. In early March of 2012, polls showed Wiens claiming 15 percent of the vote, a remarkably high figure in a campaign that has included numerous candidates. Given the long dominance of the Colorado Party in the history of Paraguayan politics and the deep national frustration with the current government, it seems clear that whoever wins the nomination within the Colorado Party is almost certain to become the country's next president.

The story of Arnoldo Wiens is only the latest chapter in the fascinating and complex history of Paraguayan Mennonite encounters with the state. In many ways, the migrations to the Paraguayan Chaco in the 1920s, '30s and '40s—following a tragic encounter with the Bolshevik Revolution, a complex relation with German National Socialism, years of upheaval and terror under Stalin and frustrations with provincial governments in Canada—could be understood as a flight from politics. Throughout the long reign of the Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner (1954-1989), Mennonites insisted they wanted nothing to do with politics.

Yet political engagement of one sort or another seems inescapable. Although Mennonites make up only about 1 percent of the country's population, they produce some 40 percent of Paraguay's meat, more than half its dairy products, and they employ thousands of factory workers. As a group, Mennonites enjoy incomes approximately 12 times higher than the national average.

Not surprisingly, in recent years Mennonites have begun to translate their economic influence into the political arena. During the past two decades, many Mennonites have served as elected officials in regional and national parliaments and as the governor of the province of Boquerón, home of the three largest Mennonite colonies. In 2003, the country's newly elected president, Nicanor Duarte Frutos—whose wife, Gloria, was an active member of the Raices Mennonite Brethren congregation in Asuncíon—convinced several Mennonites to serve in powerful cabinet-level positions. To be sure, that presidency ended under a disappointing cloud of corruption charges and renewed debate about involvement in national politics. But when Nicanor's successor, Fernando Lugo—a Catholic ex-bishop and friend of the controversial Venezuelan president, Hugo Chavez—made issues of land reform, economic justice and the human rights of indigenous peoples the center of his political agenda, many Mennonites began to worry.

Early last December, Wiens wrote a letter to "the Mennonite colonies in Paraguay" and evoked the memory of past encounters with socialist governments. "In Paraguay," he wrote, "we have found a new homeland … and have advanced to become the prosperous colonies that we are today.

Unfortunately, he continued, "the communist ideology" of the current government means that "our future in this country is no longer secured." Supporting the Valor Republicano, Wiens insisted, "will clearly protect private property" and restore moral order to Paraguayan governance.

On March 3, however, Wiens shocked his supporters by suddenly suspending his campaign and declaring his support for a rival candidate, Horacio Cartes. The announcement was especially surprising since Cartes is under investigation in both Paraguay and the United States for alleged connections to several Mexican drug cartels.

How the drama will play out remains to be seen. In the meantime, Mennonites in North America, who continue to struggle mightily over the nature of their own political involvement, would benefit from ongoing attention to the Paraguayan story. What counsel would you give the Mennonites in Paraguay? What would you like to learn from them? Could you imagine a Mennonite president? TM

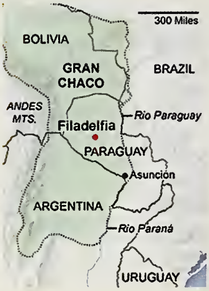
John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Mennonites in North America would benefit from ongoing attention to the Paraguayan story.

Ranches are replacing forests in Paraguay's Chaco

Mennonites in Paraguay find themselves in the midst of a controversy over deforestation in the Chaco region of the country. As Simon Romero writes in the March 24 issue of the *New York Times*: "Huge tracts of the Chaco are being razed in a scramble into one of South America's most remote corners by cattle ranchers from Brazil, Paraguay's giant neighbor, and German-speaking Mennonites, descendants of colonists who arrived here nearly a century ago and work as farmers and ranchers."

The Chaco thorn forest, often called "the green hell," covers an area roughly the size of Poland. Mennonites, who first arrived in the 1920s, having left starvation in Russia, settled in this area and tamed part of this wilderness in order to grow crops and raise livestock. They created communities such as Filadelfia, Neuland, Friedensfeld and Neu-Halbstadt.



As a result of the Mennonites' hard work over the decades, they have experienced a degree of prosperity. They have also developed relationships with indigenous tribes, and many of these people have become Christians. See *Garden in the Wilderness: Mennonite Communities in the Paraguayan Chaco 1927-1997* by Edgar Stoesz and Muriel T. Stackley (CMBC Publications, 1999) and *Like a Mustard Seed: Mennonites in Paraguay* by Edgar Stoesz (Herald Press, 2003).

Now that developers are destroying huge tracts of land in the Chaco in order to make room for vast herds of cattle, environmentalists and anthropologists are expressing alarm about the destruction of endangered plant and animal life.

"Scientists fear that the expansion of cattle ranching could wipe out what is a beguiling frontier for the discovery of new species," writes Romero. There is also concern for "the Chaco's indigenous peoples, who number in the thousands and have been grappling for decades with forays by foreign missionaries, the rising clout of the Mennonites and infighting among different tribes."

José Luis Casaccia, a prosecutor and former environment minister, has been outspoken and active in opposing this destruction. "If we continue with this insanity," he says, "nearly all of the Chaco's forests could be destroyed within 30 years."

One group of hunter-gatherers, the Ayoreo, is under particular stress from the changes. They have felt hounded by bulldozers. Their word for bulldozer, "eapajocacade," means "attackers of the world."

While the Mennonite communities are the focus of attention in this destruction, "they deny that they are to blame, contending that they abide by Paraguayan law, which requires landowners to keep a quarter of Chaco properties forested," writes Romero.

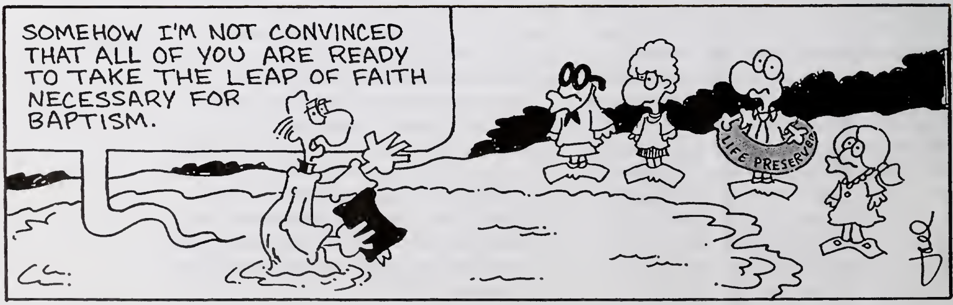
The greater amount of development is being carried out by Brazilian landowners. Tranquilo Favero, a Brazilian soybean farmer and rancher who is one of Paraguay's richest men, controls an estimated 615,000 acres of land in the Chaco.

One rancher says "there are now 1 million heads (sic) of cattle in Alto Paraguay, whereas 15 years ago there were just 50,000."

Patrick Friesen, communications manager for a Mennonite cooperative in Filadelfia, says property prices had surged fivefold in recent years. Meanwhile, the Ayoreo's way of life is disappearing.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


SOMEHOW I'M NOT CONVINCED THAT ALL OF YOU ARE READY TO TAKE THE LEAP OF FAITH NECESSARY FOR BAPTISM.
LIFE PRESERVER

© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

“If Americans want to live the American dream, they should move to Denmark.”—Richard Wilkinson, British researcher on how economic inequality harms societies

Bottled water a bummer

Bottled water uses nonrenewable resources—in the oil that goes into making the bottles themselves. The bottles fill up landfills and add to what is called the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch,” one of the huge masses of garbage and other waste floating in the Pacific and other oceans. The use of bottled water also creates what is called an “inverted quarantine.” Bottled water sends the message that tap water isn't really safe to use. People who can afford bottled water quarantine themselves from public water. Their time and money would be better spent, and justice served, by advocating for safe water to drink for everyone.—*Christian Century*

What Americans ignore about Finland's school success

Finland's national education system has been receiving particular praise because in recent years Finnish students have been turning in some of the highest test scores in the world. Finland's success is especially intriguing because Finnish schools assign less homework and engage children in more creative play. Pasi Sahlberg, director of the Finnish Ministry of Education's Center for International Mobility and author of the book *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?* says there are certain things nobody in America really wants to talk about, namely, “there are no private schools in Finland.” No private universities, either. He adds that “in Finland all teachers and administrators are given prestige, decent pay and a lot of responsibility.” And there are no standardized tests.—*The Atlantic*

.5 billion

Number of trees killed in Texas in 2011 from the ongoing drought, according to the Texas Forest Service.—*Sierra*

1 billion

Number of cars in the world.—*Sierra*

5 million tons

Amount of oil spilled in Russia each year, according to Russian government documents.—*Sierra*

Do electronic medical records save money?

Experts have long argued that computerized patient records will save the health system money by helping doctors reduce the number of redundant or inappropriate tests they order. A new study published in *Health Affairs*, disputes that, suggesting that office-based physicians who have access to electronic records of patient care are actually more likely to order additional imaging tests and laboratory tests than doctors who rely on paper records.—*New York Times*

Giving is up in churches

Churches suffered from plummeting donations after the recession began in 2008. But in the past year, a majority of congregations experienced giving increases because of a better economy, higher attendance and more church teaching on giving. —*Religion News Service*

309%

Increase in attacks against Christians in Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 2003 and 2010 —*Newsweek*

2.2 billion

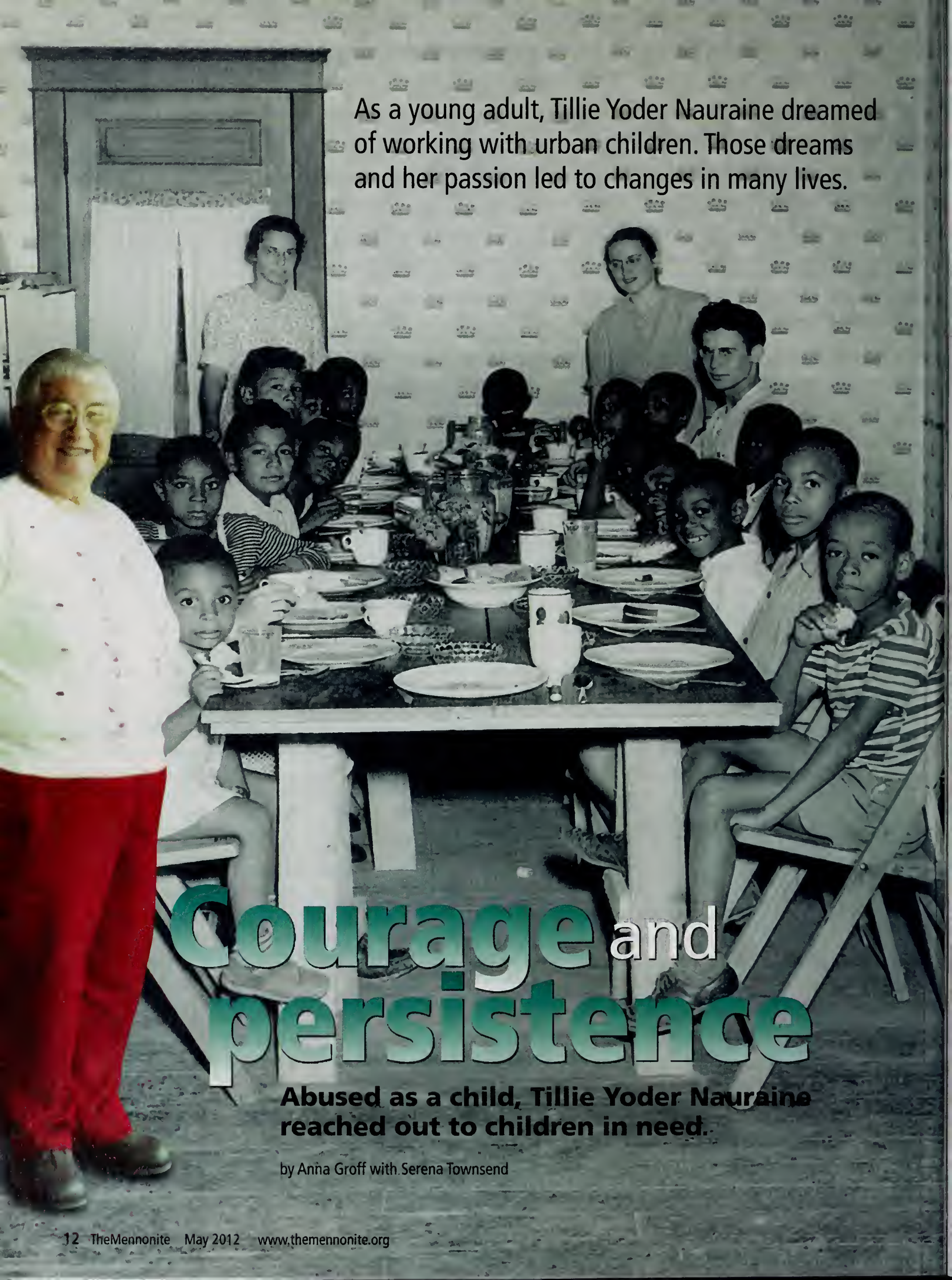
Number of people who live in nations where restrictions on religion have substantially increased—*Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life study*

Homeless subject to physical violence

Nearly one in five clients of Christian rescue missions say they were victims of physical violence within the past year, a 6 percent jump from the previous year, according to a new survey. “It's quite possible that the uptick in physical violence ... is due to a friend or family member's feeling of desperation and helplessness accompanying their unemployment and underemployment,” says John Ashmen, president of the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions.—*Religion News Service*

Normative messaging cuts energy use

Opower, an energy startup in Arlington, Va., looked for ways to get people to lower their energy use. One method that shows some promise is called normative messaging, showing people how their energy use compares with their neighbors. In one study, homes that received messages that appealed to the environment, social responsibility and financial self-interest, as well as the information-only control group, all used more electricity after receiving the messages. The only homes that used less were the ones bombarded with descriptive norms, such as this: “77 percent of San Marcos (Calif.) residents often use fans instead of AC in the summer. Fans are your community's popular choice.”—*Miller-McCune*



As a young adult, Tillie Yoder Nauraine dreamed of working with urban children. Those dreams and her passion led to changes in many lives.

Courage and persistence

Abused as a child, Tillie Yoder Nauraine reached out to children in need.

by Anna Groff with Serena Townsend

We do not believe that a mass hand-raising upon the invitation to accept Christ is adequate.—Tillie Yoder Nauraine

Tillie, who grew up Amish partly in Kokomo, Ind., but mostly in Holmes County, Ohio, had an abusive childhood, perhaps one of the reasons she took compassion on young children in need throughout her life and implemented programs to reach out to them.

In her 1975 autobiography, *The Life and Times of Tillie Nauraine*, she describes at length the physical abuse she and her sister experienced, usually from her father but sometimes from her mother. The abuse included "frequent whippings designed to 'break our will,' " she writes.

"We were often sent after our own green switches either from the lilac bush or the peach trees in the orchard. ... My father, all our life at home, read the Bible, had family prayers, attended church and lectured us on the meaning of the Bible. Yet our most painful experiences in life were at his hands," she writes.

However, the beatings eventually stopped when she was around 13—after she and her younger sister temporarily ran away from home.

Then, in 1947, when Tillie was a young woman at Hesston (Kan.) College, she began a "Fresh Air" camp on her father's farm for urban boys from Chicago. Earlier that year, Tillie went home to Holmes County, Ohio, for Christmas break. During that visit, she daydreamed about how to use an empty house on her father's farm and soon realized she wanted to start a camp. Her father approved of her idea, and she enlisted help for that summer.

Tillie had moved to Hesston in 1946 from Eastern Mennonite College (now University), Harrisonburg, Va., which did not permit African Americans to enroll as students. This struck Tillie as wrong; she had an African-American friend from Virginia, Margaret Webb, known as "Peggy," who wanted to attend Eastern Mennonite Seminary but was not allowed. Virginia Mennonite Conference encouraged Peggy to attend Hesston (Kan.) College instead. In 1946, Tillie left Harrisonburg for Hesston with Peggy, according to Martha Ann Kanagy of Kidron, Ohio, who later became close friends with Tillie.

(In 1952, Peggy reapplied to Eastern Mennonite and became the first African-American student to graduate from the school, according to a 2011 article on EMU's website.)

Camp Ebenezer

One significant helper at the camp on Tillie's father's land was her friend from Hesston, Martha Ann. The camp, then called Camp Ebenezer, stands as the forerunner of Camp Luz, now operated by Ohio Mennonite Conference. Laurence Horst, then director of Voluntary Service for Mennonite Board of Missions in Elkhart, Ind., assisted Tillie, along with nearby churches.

The first summer of camp was a homegrown affair for the boys from Chicago. Tillie wrote in an undated essay: "We cooked on a four-burner kerosene stove. We hauled water in milk cans on a wheelbarrow from the fresh water spring at the big house. Churches in the area laundered clothes. Swimming in the old Daughty Creek substituted for showers."

However, the interest and participation of the children at camp amazed and impressed Martha Ann. "Some of the boys had to stay in tents because there were more than expected," she said. "They had a great time and were well behaved."

Camp Ebenezer offered Bible classes, recreation, nature study and more. While the programming included spiritual development, Tillie did not appear to support large altar calls or put pressure on the young campers.

"We do not believe that a mass hand-raising upon the invitation to accept Christ is adequate. We believe each child must make a personal decision, and he can do this only by coming to one of

Three boys gather eggs at Camp Ebenezer, circa 1950. Photo from Mennonite Church USA Historical Archives

A boy feeds hogs at Camp Ebenezer, circa 1950. Photo from Mennonite Church USA Historical Archives

the staff and talking over his desire to be a Christian," she wrote in a 1949 issue of *Gospel Herald*, the publication of the Mennonite Church at the time.

Many of the boys told Tillie and Martha Ann about how they disliked their schoolteachers back home and described their meanness to the students, which brought out the worst in the students. However, Martha Ann said that major disciplinary issues did not arise during camp.

In few cases did the exchanges between the hosts and the African-American children lead to "involvement with African-American adults, civil rights marches or other action against racial injustice."—Tobin Miller Shearer

Tillie also supported mutual relationships developed at camp between the staff and the campers. She planned trips for the camp staff to visit the homes of the children who came to camp.

"If the staff knows something of the homes, the communities and the environment in which the children live, it gives them a better insight into the needs of each child who attends camp," Tillie wrote in an article in the *Gospel Herald* in 1949.

In another essay, Tillie named the publicity her camp received in *Gospel Herald* as a reason it thrived. It continued for four consecutive summers. Many individuals shared food, bedding, transportation and funds.

Over the years, scholars offered critiques to similar camp and Fresh Air programs. As Tobin Miller Shearer writes in his 2008 dissertation, "'A Pure Fellowship': The Danger and Necessity of Purity in White and African-American Mennonite Racial Exchange," in few cases did the exchanges between the hosts and the African-American children lead to "involvement with African-American adults, civil rights marches or other action against racial injustice."

Furthermore, the African-American children were subject to the standards of the Mennonite hosts. "Although the children gained travel and adventure, they did so at the cost of dealing with hosts who often tried to make them conform to a worldview based on prejudice and racism," Miller Shearer writes. On the other hand, the children altered the adults' perceptions of racial purity, as they forced the adults to reexamine their racial myths and expanded their worldview.

Bible school in Cleveland

In 1947, Tillie took a year off from college and worked in Wooster, Ohio, according to the 1986 book *The Black Mennonite Church in North America* by Leroy Bechler.

"She began to think that she wanted to do something closer to home," says Vern Miller, 84, who knew Tillie from Goshen (Ind.) College and later planted the Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland that grew out of a Bible school program, Gladstone Mennonite Mission, started by Tillie.

"Since home was Holmes County, Youngstown and Cleveland became her target," says Miller. "She wanted to serve African-American communities in Ohio in the way the Larks were serving Bethel in Chicago."

(Tillie met James H. Lark as a Hesston student when she volunteered as a summer Bible school teacher at Bethel Mennonite Church in Chicago, where Lark served as pastor. Lark was the first ordained African-American Mennonite.)

Miller, a student at Goshen at the time, says that Tillie asked him to join the Gladstone ministry. He agreed and spent two summers volunteering at the Bible schools. Miller stayed in Cleveland and planted a church in Gladstone in 1957 that closed due to an urban renewal program. Later, in 1959, he began Lee Heights, with the foremost goal of forming a "self-governing and self-supporting" congregation, according to Bechler's book.

Regina Shands Stoltzfus, a Goshen College professor, writes in a *Mennonite Life* (Summer 2011) article that Lee Heights committed itself to this new model of "indigenous partnership."

"People who lived in the host communities would have a say in the structure and culture of the new church," she writes. Gerald Hughes, longtime music director, Eileen Friend, Alice Phillips and many community members played important leadership roles.

The Bible school program started when, one day during Tillie's time in Ohio, she walked around one of the most depressed areas of Cleveland and came across a school. She talked with a principal about her vision of using the school for a Bible school program. The principal directed her to the board of education's office.

This Bible school program in Cleveland required Mennonite signatures from Elkhart, Ind., and Aurora, Ohio, as well as permission from school officials in Cleveland.

"She looked [like a] very conservative Mennonite when she was downtown with the school officials," said Miller in a Jan. 12 interview. "She had the courage to wait several hours. When they saw that she wasn't going anywhere, they finally talked with her, and out of that conversation these Bible schools happened.

"In the summer of 1948, she had the use of those schools free of charge," Miller said. "It was a miracle."

The Bible school program started when, one day during Tillie's time in Ohio, she walked around one of the most depressed areas of Cleveland and came across a school.

The Mennonite Voluntary Service unit's volunteers worked as the teachers, as did individuals from Plainview Mennonite in Aurora. The summer of 1948 had over 400 children, which "flabbergasted" the MVS unit, according to Bechler's book. "The rest is history," said Miller.

According to Bechler, the Bible schools attracted hundreds of individuals from 1948 to the early 1950s, and camping played a major part in the programming.

"Tillie Yoder's vision of a spiritual ministry away from the inner city continued to bear fruit in Gladstone's summer program," writes Bechler.

"[Tillie] was persistent. She had a vision and followed it," Miller said. "For me, she was an inspiration."

Anna Groff is associate editor of The Mennonite. *Serena Townsend as a student at Goshen (Ind.) College was an intern with* The Mennonite *this spring.*

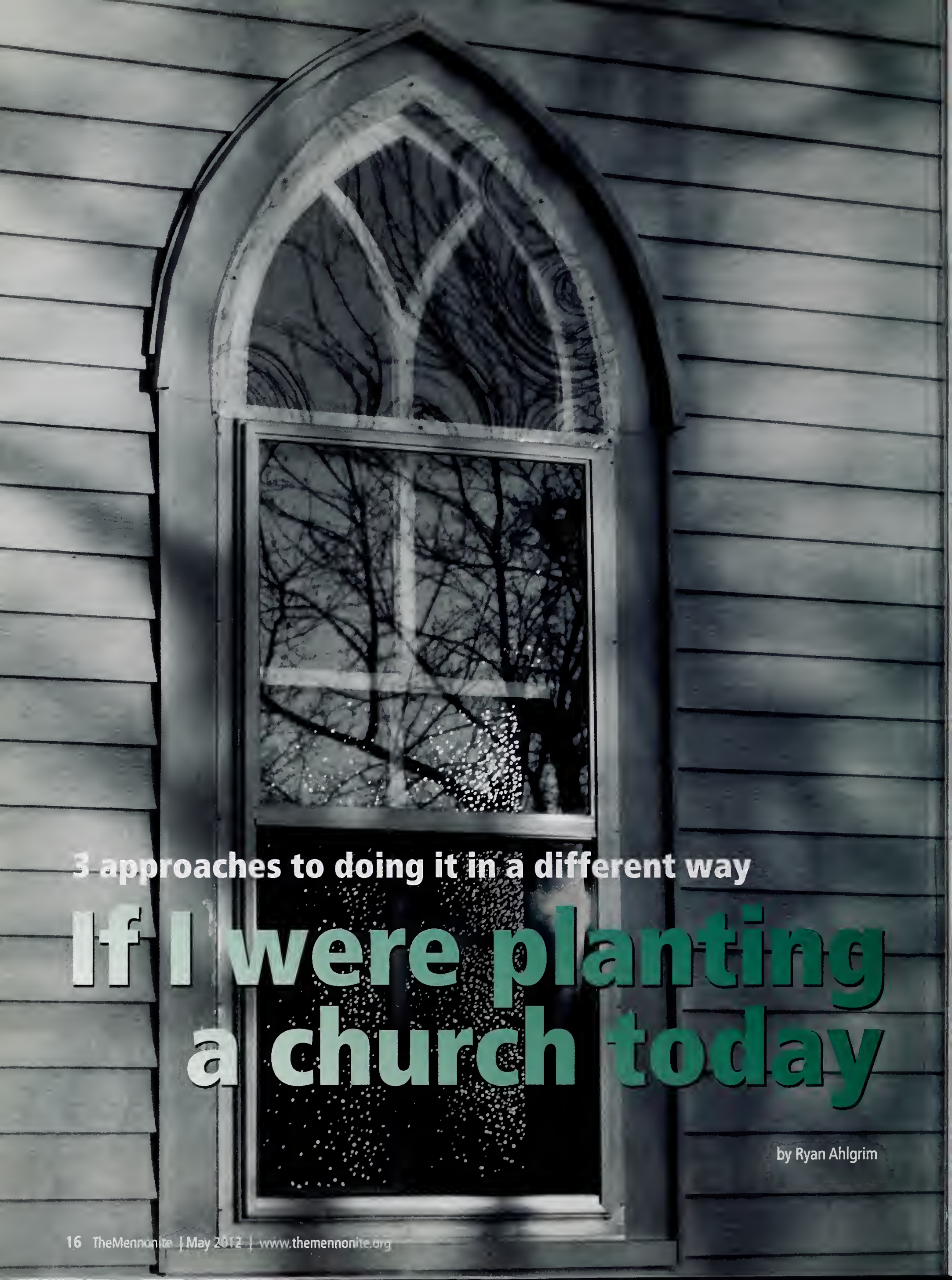
'On the edge of emotional catastrophe'

According to the Mennonite Church USA Historical Archives, Tillie married Joe Nauraine from Goshen (Ind.) College in 1952, and they raised four children. They spent time volunteering at a boys' home in San Juan, Puerto Rico, for five years and later returned to Indiana, then Iowa, where they both worked as social workers. They moved many times in the United States.

Despite Tillie's legacy of service, her marriage with Joe brought pain throughout her life. She and Joe struggled in their relationship, causing Tillie to experience depression and frustration. In her autobiography she describes their marriage as "living on the edge of emotional catastrophe of one kind or another."

She names Joe's sexual identity and financial decisions as the most significant conflicts they faced. Upon returning from their time in Puerto Rico, Tillie saw a therapist and concluded that she could live with Joe if she had adequate emotional distance from him. "I could never again be so emotionally bound up in him as I had been before," she wrote. Joe later died, in 1975.

Later in life, Tillie returned to Goshen and began making ceramic dolls. She opened a doll shop and sold handmade dolls, many that she made. She also wrote children's literature. In 2009, she sent her first book to the publishers—although her friends do not know the outcome. Tillie died on Feb. 27, 2010, in Goshen.—*Anna Groff*



3 approaches to doing it in a different way

If I were planting a church today

by Ryan Ahlgrim

If I were planting a church today, I would try different approaches from the ones I used in 1984.

My first pastorate after graduating from seminary was a church plant in Peoria, Ill. I spent 11 years there, developing a small congregation of diverse people—rich and poor, sinners and saints, Mennonites and non-Mennonites—who gave me some of my most poignant experiences of the kingdom of God. We rented a room for the first five years but then raised enough money to buy a vacant church building. The congregation poured enthusiasm and energy into making renovations, and we pursued various avenues of outreach and invitation. We experienced some modest growth, but we never attained enough critical mass to be able to relax. We were always anxious about being too small, worried about the budget and exhausted by the effort of maintaining the expected ministries of a congregation.

The future vitality of Mennonite Church USA depends on planting more churches, but we need to do this in a way that is sustainable and embodies our radical understanding of the gospel. Let me suggest the following approaches for consideration:

1. Build house churches instead of a church building. The congregation I currently serve recently spent over $1 million to add more classrooms onto our church building. Given our growth and space needs and the type of congregation we are, a building addition was the right thing to do. But it was certainly expensive, and it is a shame to see those new classrooms used for only a few hours each week. But if our congregation were a network of house churches, we could avoid the enormous costs of being a brick-and-mortar church.

Consider how Blockbuster and Borders went into bankruptcy because their expensive brick-and-mortar approach could no longer compete with the online companies. Are there other ways of doing congregational ministry that are more financially efficient? Do most congregations really need to have their own facilities—facilities that are expensive to build and maintain and empty for most of the week?

Here's an alternative approach: In the initial "prechurch" stage, grow a congregation through creating weekly home Bible studies for adults. Continue adding new home Bible study groups as the membership of each gets larger than 12 or 15. When at least five groups are running successfully—with 50 or more total adults—then move to the "church" stage by having joint worship services monthly in a rented facility. The home Bible studies continue to meet weekly and are now designated as house churches—responsible for providing mutual aid, engaging in mission projects and performing weekly rituals of worship.

One of the inherent problems with house churches is that they are too small for youth groups and children's classes—programs that a lot of parents insist their church provide. But if several house churches network together as one congregation, they can bring together all of their youth and children for classes and activities—monthly or more often. This is a radically different model of doing church, but consider the advantages: built-in mini-congregations that effectively nurture their members, strong lay leadership, a simple structure with stripped-down programming, and dramatically lower overhead costs. That means that, other than paying for leadership, nearly all of the offerings can go toward mission and helping the poor.

In a typical church, how much of the budget goes to helping those who are in severe economic need? Take out the salaries and benefits, the mortgage and utilities, the supplies and computers and copiers, the retreats and camps, the costs for programming, as well as the administrative and programming costs of the conference and denomination. What's left? What actually goes to helping those who have less? In my current congregation, it may be 15 percent of the total budget. So those who give 10 percent of their salary to my church are actually giving 1.5 percent of it to the poor. Those who give 5 percent of their salary to the church are actually giving less than 1

> If our congregation were a network of house churches, we could avoid the enormous costs of being a brick-and-mortar church.

percent to the poor. This is a disgrace to the gospel. The church's mission is certainly much larger than just helping the poor, but I find it shocking how little the most needy are receiving from our giving. House churches can help us change this. Perhaps people will be more drawn to house churches and filled with passion for mission when they realize that most of their giving is actually helping those in desperate need.

2. Plant multiracial churches in urban and suburban areas. Most of the current growth in Mennonite Church USA is happening in the cities and suburbs—and this is likely to become even more the case in the future. So this is where we should be concentrating our church-planting efforts. But let's do it differently. Let's demonstrate the gospel by breaking down the most visible division on Sunday mornings—division by race.

> Until we learn to worship together, racial reconciliation is not fully possible.

To do this we must plant churches that are designed to be multiracial from day one. It is nearly impossible for an already existing white congregation to become a significantly integrated congregation, and it is no easier for an already existing black congregation to accomplish this. So the racial integration must be in the initial planning, in the core group and in the leadership. Worship styles must be blended and agreed upon ahead of time; organizational and leadership styles must be studied so as to bring together the best of their respective cultures. A multiracial congregation is not easily created, but if done successfully, such a congregation will have a clear and visible mission and offer its neighbors an exciting and unique alternative in Christian community.

The purpose of a multiracial congregation goes beyond its outreach potential. Until we learn to worship together, racial reconciliation is not fully possible. It is through the experience of being nurtured together and doing Christ's mission together that we learn to respect and understand one another.

Another positive byproduct of a multiracial Mennonite congregation is that by its nature it undermines "Mennonite" as an ethnic identity and enhances its theological identity. Mennonite Church USA is failing to be Christian so long as being Mennonite normally means sharing common ancestors and certain cultural experiences. We must have the courage to change the definition of Mennonite. We would truly be Christian if, a generation from now, our neighbors identified "Mennonite" not only with peacemaking but with cultural and racial integration.

Of course, not every church plant is in an area where there are significant numbers of different racial groups to draw from and bring together. In such cases, the church plant should be designed to overcome the other biggest divide in our society—the divide between the rich and the poor. The challenges and the benefits would be similar to planting a multi-racial congregation.

3. Move away from professional, full-time pastoral ministry to more volunteer and part-time pastoral ministry. The United Methodist Church last year completed a massive study of more than 32,000 congregations in order to discover the key factors needed for a vital congregation. One of the surprising results was that it did not matter whether the pastor had a seminary degree or how long he or she had been in ministry. When I first read this report, I was baffled. I am sure that my seminary education has helped me be a more effective pastor; I can't imagine being able to offer healthy pastoral counseling without the training I received, and I certainly understand the Bible better because of the courses I took. But I wonder: Are the benefits of seminary education being balanced out by the tendency for full-time, seminary-educated pastors to take over too much leadership—and do too much of the ministry—in a congregation?

The Methodist study found four factors that fuel vitality in churches: worship that blends contemporary and traditional styles and offers relevant sermons, small groups, pastors who mentor the laity and effective lay leadership. Most of these factors revolve around the ministry of those who are not the pastors. Professional clergy—for all their helpful information and skills—are perhaps getting in the way of letting the congregation be the center of the ministry. Maybe that is why—on balance—it makes no difference to the vitality of a congregation whether the pastor went to seminary.

I'm not suggesting pastors should avoid seminary education; I am suggesting we alter the purpose of seminary education. Instead of seminary being the road to ministry professionalization, let's make it the avenue for training everyone—

pastors, other congregational leaders and the congregation as a whole. Instead of assuming that every pastor should have a Master of Divinity degree or that only the pastor takes seminary courses, let's assume the entire congregation should be equipped for ministry. A college or seminary course in Anabaptist theology should be a minimum educational requirement for all pastors so that the denomination maintains its essential identity and mission. But let us open up more options for equipping all church members.

I fear that recent calls to institute continuing education requirements in order for pastors to maintain their credentials are wrongheaded. If well-educated pastors were the key to vital congregations, mainline denominations would be growing instead of shrinking. As the Methodist study indicates, most congregations do just as well without a highly trained pastor; so let's focus more on leadership by volunteers or part-time pastors. Our denomination certainly needs a good supply of scholars and highly trained pastoral leaders, but Mennonite congregations that require full-time professional pastors are a minority.

Moving toward more volunteer and part-time pastors would not only help develop the ministry and leadership of church members, it would also free up the congregation's financial resources for more mission and assistance for the poor. Just the cost of providing health-care insurance for full-time pastors is unattainable for many congregations. Whatever the benefits of having full-time pastors may be, most churches can no longer afford them. Professional ministry is getting priced out of existence—and perhaps that's not always a bad thing.

So let's change our expectations for pastoral ministry. Instead of hiring one person to do all the counseling, visitation, preaching, administration, community outreach and maintenance of conference connections, break these down into many leadership roles done by several people in the congregation. The result will be more vital congregations and healthier pastors. Pastors have just one essential role in the congregation: to be the resident theologian who interprets the gospel for today and thereby helps keep the mission of the congregation on track.

Is it possible for Mennonite Church USA to pull back on full-time professional congregational leadership without the church going stagnant? The Mormon Church at every level is mostly run by volunteer leaders without professional training—yet it is one of the fastest-growing and vigorous religious groups in the United States and around the world. Similarly, Pentecostalism's growth does not seem to be hampered by its dearth of pastoral professionals. The lure of relying on full-time professional pastors is strong, but it is time for Mennonite Church USA to rethink pastoral ministry. (I say this as one of those full-time professionals.) What we are doing is not sustainable or even the most helpful. Volunteer leaders and part-time pastors will not bring us into stagnation; more likely, they will help us recover our mission.

Whatever the benefits of having full-time pastors may be, most churches can no longer afford them.

If I were planting a church today, these are some of the directions I would try to pursue. But there is no one correct approach to planting churches or being the church. The future of Mennonite Church USA will depend on many visionaries trying many different approaches. And traditional models are still appropriate and effective in various settings.

I appreciate my experience as a church planter long ago in Peoria. It instilled in me ongoing reflections on how best to be the church today. Sadly, a few years after I left Peoria, the congregation decided to close its doors. Its existence was short, but the lessons I learned remain.

Ryan Ahlgrim is pastor of First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis.

Organizing church around the moving of the Holy Spirit

Church growth led by the Spirit

by Roland Kuhl

Over the four years I have been on the pastoral staff of North Suburban Mennonite Church in Libertyville, Ill., I've had numerous conversations with pastors seeking to increase ministry effectiveness by revitalizing their congregations through a programming effort. In one such conversation, a church planter showed me a 30-step plan his denomination had given him for planting a church. Seeing all the steps he was expected to follow, I said, "All you need to do is add people, and you'll have a church." Missing the tongue-in-cheek nature of my comment, he said, "Yes, that's right."

▶

Pastor Roland Kuhl baptizes Dana Kym. Photo provided

For almost three years, North Suburban Mennonite has been on a different track, the fruit of which is revitalizing us. In seeking to be a missional church, we have been exploring what it means for us to be a Spirit-led community.

Being a 25-year-old community facing a major transition, with most of our children off to college and likely not returning, we asked whether God still wants an Anabaptist witness in Lake County, since we are the only Mennonite congregation in the area. We discerned that God is not done with us yet but wants us to be a community where all those the Spirit brings into our midst can be formed as disciples of Jesus—radically committed to Jesus, stubbornly loyal to one another and committed to ways of peace.

Realizing this, we saw that we need to be more courageous in living as a missional community. And so we have explored ways we might more intentionally participate with God in the redemptive mission of making all things new (cf. Revelation 21:5). We have asked how we might develop greater sensitivity in noticing what God is noticing and for the Spirit to set our ministry agenda.

This focus on the Spirit as the vital element in being missional is iterated in *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* by Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile. They write: "It is vital to keep at the forefront of our imaginations the creative power of the Spirit in shaping church organizations. ... The creativity of the Spirit animates and renews forms of church organization as part of God's dynamic and ongoing creation."

As a result, we've had serious dialogue on how to develop ministry that is led by the Spirit in our midst. It has taken some time to learn how to be more open to the Spirit's leading. In the early days of this dialogue, people often expressed how chaotic this seems to be: "How can we control or give shape to what we need to be or do if we are led by the Spirit?" Being open to the leading of the Spirit often seems like chaos to us because we want to shape the way we do ministry.

What opened us more to the Spirit's leading happened about a year ago and involved reconciling relationships within our community. A few years ago we mishandled the way we dismissed people who served on our pastoral team. This caused much pain and created barriers with one another and the Spirit. When we took the courageous step to forgive and be forgiven, the Spirit brought about reconciliation. We experienced the breaking down of barriers and healing of relationships. Then, almost immediately, the Spirit led new people into our community who were seeking a different way of following Jesus.

The Spirit has brought us together to revitalize our Anabaptist witness in Lake County. Over the past year or so about 20 new people have become part of our community—almost one-third of our Sunday worship gathering. These people are exploring how to be disciples of Jesus in Anabaptist ways. This has not come through any marketing effort, though it helps to have a good web presence so that we can be more easily found by those seeking out our Mennonite community.

In learning to respond to the Spirit's leading we are being stretched and renewed in these ways:

Being open to the leading of the Spirit often seems like chaos to us because we want to shape the way we do ministry.

1. We have developed the understanding that whoever comes into our community are those the Spirit is bringing. We realize this requires our being open in new ways. We are discovering that these new people appreciate the safe place that such a welcoming attitude creates for exploring faith, discipleship and healing. As a result, their presence is changing our personality as a church. They bring new questions, new ways of seeing things and new ways of doing things. In welcoming them, we are also opening ourselves to the work of the Spirit in us.

For example, there has been more speaking of God's presence in our lives during our sharing and praying and in our coffee fellowship conversations. Like other Mennonites, North Suburban's witness has often been more focused on actions than words—we minister to children in our community, help provide access to healthy produce for lower-income families, give support to the homeless and work for peace and justice.

The new people in our community, many of whom come from evangelical contexts, are drawn to the way we live out the gospel. However, in finding a home with us they also challenge us to speak more openly of Jesus and of God's presence in our lives. Their presence is changing us, shaping us to give witness to Jesus and the gospel in both actions and words.

Donde la tristeza es gozo
El llanto es alegría
Subamos a adorar al gran rey

From left: Nate Yordy, Craig Kym, Dale Kempf (youth leader), Alia Munley, Deanna Sell (hidden), Kay Kempf (youth leader), Caleb Longenecker, Philip Longenecker and Isaac Longenecker lead worship following Pittsburgh 2011.
Photo provided

2. In receiving those the Spirit brings, we realize they are not just brought into our community to backfill our ministry openings, as if their only value is for the gifts they have. Rather, in recognizing their presence as the moving of the Spirit, we receive these people as gifts. They are gifts of the Spirit to the community—shaping our life, our ministry, our witness, our participation in what God is doing in the world.

As a result, we are exploring perspectives they bring to our attention. As a peace church, we have not given much thought to how we can minister to war veterans returning from Iraq, knowing that we could not participate in celebrating their service. Not until, that is, a new participant in our community asked, "Do we have anything to offer returning vets?" Not only did this lead to a discussion about Anabaptist opposition to violence and military service, it opened the door for some of us to participate in a workshop hosted by Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., on "Healing the Spiritual Wounds of War." There we came to realize that we as a peace church have much to offer war veterans, who have become victims through their participation in violence. We learned that many soldiers who experience combat suffer great moral injury and cannot align themselves with the training they received that justifies killing human beings. Bringing healing to war veterans suffering such moral injury may never lead us to be seen as a military-friendly church, but as we explore how to minister to traumatized war veterans, we may become a church friendly to veterans who have been injured by the military.

As we explore how to minister to traumatized war veterans, we may become a church friendly to veterans injured by the military.

3. Receiving these new members as gifts of the Spirit, we find ourselves learning to be more open to what the Spirit wants to do in us as a community. We are talking about issues in ways we never have before. These people are giving us fresh eyes to look at ourselves and our practices and invite us into exploring deeper ways of being Anabaptist followers of Jesus.

Our adult Sunday morning class has grown significantly—almost threefold—and the discussion has never been livelier. New people want to explore what it means to be a Mennonite. We studied a 16th-century Swiss Brethren tract to guide our discussion. As expected, the dialogue exploring how Anabaptist practices might be incorporated into our lives excited these new people, yet their questions also helped those of us who have been part of this community for years take a deeper look at what shapes our being Mennonite. Our mutual exploration of being Anabaptist is leading the whole community to more deeply affirm our Anabaptist distinctives.

4. We are coming to recognize that what is going on in our midst cannot be readily depicted on an organizational chart, because what is happening is being shaped by the rhythms of the Spirit. The Spirit is leading us into new rhythms and teaching us how to be in partnership with God's reconciling and re-creating mission. We are learning to trust the Spirit to lead us and organize us as we become partners with God.

Sensing the freedom to engage in issues they felt they could not explore in their previous churches, many newer people are forming small group gatherings around justice concerns, dialogue on Scripture and exploring Anabaptist perspectives and practices. In being led by the Spirit, we are open to giving space for new people to develop new ministry directions. One such ministry is focused on the development of an Anabaptist study center—not only for equipping our community but for creating a way to express an Anabaptist witness in the wider community—presenting an alternative way of following Jesus, a way that embraces peace, justice and nonviolence.

I am excited about the continuing direction the Spirit is leading us in as we are open to the Spirit. As North Suburban journeys alongside those the Spirit is bringing into our community, we all participate with God in God's mission in the world. The Spirit is leading us to develop our witness, outreach and ministry in distinctively Anabaptist ways.

Roland G. Kuhl is pastor of North Suburban Mennonite Church in Libertyville, Ill., and conference minister liaison for cultivating missional church for Illinois Mennonite Conference.

Many newer people are forming small group gatherings around justice concerns, dialogue on Scripture and exploring Anabaptist perspectives and practices.

Anne Munley and Paul Scott lead a worship at North Suburban Mennonite Church.

Photo provided

Who gets the church when a couple divorces?

by Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

When a couple divorces, lawyers help decide how jointly held possessions are divided. There are many things, however, such as church attendance, that the couple must negotiate on its own. ▶

© Susan Gingerich, 2012 TM photo contest entry

Ways churches can be a place of healing for those who are divorced

One divorcee, when asked who gets the church, replies vehemently, "Who wants it?" In spite of continued committed involvement in her congregation, she is candid about the immense difficulties separated couples and their families encounter there. "I hated it," she says. "There seems to be an assumption that now you will start working on [your marriage], but you've done so much soul-searching already. It's so painful to get to that place. You are judging yourself. ... I knew I was being judged."

Another person in a similar situation admits, "I felt ashamed, even humiliated, in church. I felt like I was not a good Christian, even though it was not my conscious choice for my marriage to end. I felt like people might not understand, that I might be judged and condemned. For a few months I stopped attending church."

How exactly to be a healing place for families in the throes of separation is often unclear to even the most well-meaning congregations.

How to be a healing place

For a variety of reasons, it is difficult if not impossible for separated or divorced couples to continue attending church at all, much less the same congregation. The concluding paragraph in the "Family, Singleness and Marriage" clause of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* states: "As the family of God, the church is called to be a sanctuary offering hope and healing for families."

But the reality is that separated and divorced people often do not find support in the church as they struggle with the feelings of pain, failure, anger, grief and betrayal that are the tenacious companions of relationship breakdown.

How exactly to be a healing place for families in the throes of separation is often unclear to even the most well-meaning congregations. Hoyt Hickman writes in *Ritual in a New Day*: "At precisely the time when individuals are most lonely and need to establish links of communication with others, members of the Christian community know least how to respond, and the person is usually met with silence, embarrassment and whispered conversations that end abruptly when the person enters a room."

Divorce in historical perspective

Just over 40 years ago, divorce and remarriage was the "hot" issue in Canada for the General Conference Mennonite Church. Aldred Neufeldt, now moderator of the Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada, was a young adult on the Board of Christian Service at the 1969 assembly in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He remembers the official discussions about the issues of divorce, remarriage and church participation. A recommendation made by the Board of Christian Service chair resolved to provide resources for marriages and families and commit to ongoing study of the issues.

"Up to that point, there was reluctance to talk about divorce and strong opposition from some quarters," Neufeldt recalls. "My memory of it was to even adopt what seems innocuous to us now, the opponents wanted outright condemnation. It was a critical issue in those days. More study and resources for congregations was contentious, according to the vocal opponents, but the motion was overwhelmingly accepted by the floor."

The issue of divorce and remarriage largely dropped out of national church discussions after 1979. "By that time, there was scarcely a congregation without personal experience," Neufeldt says. "People knew these were good people caught up in difficult situations."

Minutes from the 1978 assembly in Gretna, Manitoba, note that "there appears to be no unanimity in terms of approach taken by various congregations."

While there is greater understanding and acceptance of divorced people in Mennonite churches today, practices and experiences still vary widely in and among congregations.

In order to be there for these families, church programs must be flexible so children with two homes can participate.

"Divorce seems to have lost some of its stigma in our church," says a Mennonite pastor, adding that some individuals struggle with the idea of a divorcee in a position of leadership or teaching. Side-taking and application of double standards —acceptance of divorce in a person's own family but not in others—causes further problems. The muddle of issues led to one divorced church member leaving the congregation when his volunteer gifts were not accepted by a few vocal critics.

When children are involved

The difficulties in separations are most poignant when children are involved. Separated parents agonize over what is best but may disagree with what to do about the faith practice of their children. The church often does not know how to be of help in these situations.

One pastor emphasizes the importance of showing children their parents are cared for during their struggles. "While it is difficult for both parents to share the same worship space, and the children are aware of the tensions that come with this, we need to be examples that both people are cared for and loved," he says. "This is an area where our church failed. ... Children are more aware of what happens to others than we sometimes give them credit for."

When children perceive that a parent is not treated well by the church, they are unlikely to want to continue their involvement.

Arrangements for children to remain attending their home church vary. Some may alternate between the two churches their parents attend, while others may always attend their church but with only one of the parents.

Author Elizabeth Marquardt grew up as a child of divorced parents. Although her parents had an amicable separation, and she is successful and accomplished, Marquardt writes with great sorrow about the experiences of children of divorce.

In *Between Two Worlds*, Marquardt examines the effects of the split lives children lead as they struggle to bridge the gap between parents while living in two worlds: "[I]t can be bewildering to children of divorce when neither parent is doing anything wrong, but their rules and habits are simply different."

A parent whose child alternates churches each week says, "There are two value systems ... different sets of norms. ... I don't know of any upsides to going to two churches." She wishes it were possible for her child to regularly attend one church, especially at times like Christmas, when concert practices and performances don't line up in a doable manner for the families involved.

Another divorcee who attends the same church as an ex-spouse says, "We do attend, but it is difficult. A commitment to respect and politeness is necessary for me. At this point, it does not honestly seem desirable for me, but it is good for our child."

Andrew Root, another child of divorce, describes the problem in his book *The Children of Divorce*: "I contend that what children of divorce need most is not strategies for thinking correctly but a place to belong, a community in which their humanity is upheld." He suggests the church can be an anchor for the members of a broken family. "[F]inding a community that suffers with and for us can assure us that we are real, that our suffering is embraced concretely by these people called church, who witness to God in Jesus Christ who bears our brokenness," he writes.

In order to be there for these families, church programs must be flexible so children with two homes can participate. Youth programs, kids clubs and mentorship programs can provide a sense of connectedness for children who can't attend every Sunday. At a time when grief is raw—often during the initial separation—things like scheduled play dates for children, an offer of a meal, a nonjudgmental ear or a card can be meaningful and provide encouragement for them to stay connected to the community.

Being—or becoming—a welcoming place

In all the turmoil of divorce, the church can be a place of healing as couples divide up their lives or just another profound loss. In many divorces, at least one partner stands to lose his or her community of faith and support.

For those who manage to continue attending their church, the support of friends and family is crucial.

"The only thing [that kept me coming] was that my parents went there," a divorced woman says. "The minister spent time with one and not the other."

Although it aided her, the presence of extended family was one reason her ex found it too painful to continue his attendance.

Another divorcee, with no extended family in the congregation, says, "For me, the patience, love, understanding and acceptance by both clergy and laity has been the strongest factor in healing."

A pastor currently helping a family through separation says, "Anything appropriate to care for the grieving is appropriate now."

A divorcee remembers with gratitude, the "thing that helped me most was [someone] who came and helped me move and unpack. That's all she did. That's how people can help."

Other divorced people within a congregation are important connections, as they are uniquely able to provide an understanding ear and help the newly separated feel less alone in their struggle.

Clergy and care teams, including deacons or elders, can shape an "official" church response, whether that simply means ensuring a private visit occurs and counsel is offered or by helping the couple communicate with the congregation. Each situation is best treated on its own terms, in consultation with those involved. Speaking about the hard parts of life must happen at church so that compassion, not condemnation, is a first response to people's pain.

"We need to recognize in ourselves that we are imperfect people, subject to human nature and all its failings," says a pastor. "Healing comes from a place of understanding that we are all capable of doing what has happened in the breakup of a marriage."

Says a divorcee, "The main thing is to talk openly about inclusivity and support for people in different stages in life and being there for each other and saying those kinds of things, ... make a point of including people who have just been separated to things."

The church can consciously work toward being a welcoming place by teaching there is no such thing as a perfect family.

In his book *Practices: Mennonite Worship and Witness*, John D. Roth points out that the idea of mom, dad and two kids in a single family dwelling is a recent, not biblical, image of family. "[T]o the extent that the ideal family has come to be defined in narrow and exclusive terms and as a refuge of intense privacy, the biblical family may be a source of liberating news," he writes.

One only has to look at Jesus' lineage in the Gospels to see many forms of family and various "colorful" individuals represented. Roth suggests that Christians "might practice our commitment to porous family boundaries by reshuffling our seating arrangements in worship. ... [W]e would do this ... as a reminder that family connectedness is not the only relevant category for congregational involvement and identity."

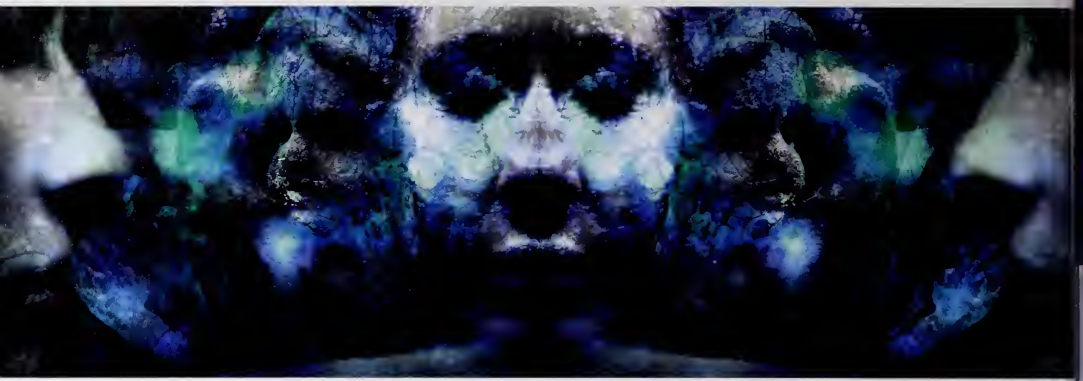
The church can consciously work toward being a welcoming place by teaching there is no such thing as a perfect family.

Setting for odd numbers at church potlucks, consciously intermingling seating during worship and other church functions and involving singles in public leadership all move the church to function more as a faith family than a collection of genetically related groupings. This helps create welcoming spaces for those who need a place to belong.

One pastor sums up her comments on divorce and the church this way: "We need to be able to share this information [pain of divorce] with the congregation as a whole and pray publicly for [people] who carry the weight of this grief. Just as we have special services for remembering those who have died, maybe we could have a public worship ritual of lament for all who carry the weight of struggling or broken relationships, named or unnamed.

"We need to name [with the permission of the couple] for the benefit of the congregation practical ways people can be supportive. We need to give people permission to call, have coffee, offer a meal and otherwise check in with [people] who carry this profound grief. We need to preach and teach and demonstrate forgiveness and the power of new hope provided by the resurrected Christ, who brings life to the dead."

Donita Wiebe-Neufeld is the Alberta correspondent for Canadian Mennonite, *from which this article is reprinted with permission.*



Handling divorce

by Eric Litwiller

Since my wife and I made the decision to divorce on Feb. 17, 2010, that event has been a significant force in shaping who I am. I grew up Mennonite, but I took my faith for granted and made a conscious effort to get out and explore what the world had to offer as soon as I could after high school graduation. Rather than going to Goshen (Ind.) College just a few minutes from my home, I went to a large state university, and though I was armed with the morals and values instilled in me by my parents and the church, I was still impressionable.

Somewhere in the midst of this cookie-cutter life, I realized I was miserable.

Surrounded by a world that valued power, career and possessions above all else, I was swayed. I graduated from college and got an important job, a nice car, a house in the suburbs. I married a wonderful woman with whom I seemed to have everything in common and decided I was happy. She brought out the best in me. She got me up on Sundays to go to church when I wanted to sleep in. She donated money to good causes when I was worried about our retirement years. She volunteered her time at homeless shelters and got me to go with her. Years went by in which I woke up in the morning, put on my suit and tie and went to work. I came home, we ate supper, watched TV and went to bed, only to do the same thing the next day. On Saturdays, I mowed the lawn, chatted with the neighbors over our white picket fence, bought things at big-box retail stores and maintained shallow relationships with friends at pool parties in the summer and cocktail parties in the fall. Somewhere in the midst of this cookie-cutter life, I realized I was miserable.

At first, I tried to deny it. There was no way I could be unhappy. This 50-inch plasma TV alone should have brought me happiness for at least a few months. Millions of Americans would have traded their eye teeth for the existence we had built in the quiet Chicago suburbs. The harder I denied it, the more miserable I became. When Valerie wanted to go to a club opening on Friday evening, I wanted to stay home and can tomato juice. When she wanted to take a vacation to Hawaii, I wanted to see what volunteer opportunities were available through Mennonite Mission Network. I was finally baptized in a Mennonite church at the age of 32. I began taking seminary classes online through Eastern Mennonite Seminary. Our pastor gave me opportunities to give the sermon at church. God was guiding me in a new direction.

Valerie and I tried counseling. To this day, I don't know what the expectation was. Was she to suddenly change her mind and decide that the kind of life that we had both wanted just a few years ago was no longer for her? Was I to find a way to repress God's call and go back to being satisfied with my sterile, unquestioned existence simply because of the love Valerie and I still shared? I'm glad we tried. After nearly 10 years of marriage to a wonderful woman, it was the least we could do. But in the end, the common ground between us

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Mast makes new case for churchgoing

It has been said that going to church is good for the soul. In his new book, Dr. Gerald Mast asserts that the benefits extend much further.

"The church should not be taken for granted … just reading the Bible, baptizing and singing together help prepare us for life in the world," said the Bluffton University communication professor and author of "Go to Church, Change the World: Christian Community as Calling."

Published in January by Herald Press, the book explores traditional church practices such as singing, baptism and communion, and how participation in them determines how churchgoers see the rest of their world, including their careers.

The idea for the book goes back to 2002, when Bluffton received a $2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment for the Pathways to Mission and Vocation project, to study theological assumptions about vocation that shape curriculum. "There are other reasons for pursuing a major, or advancing a career, than success, status or salary. So what are these other motivations?" Mast asked.

GO TO
CHURCH
CHANGE
THE WORLD
Christian Community as Calling
Gerald J. Mast

He attempted to answer that question during his 2005 sabbatical. "I proposed to the university to study an Anabaptist theology of vocation and answer what gives meaning to our work, what gets us up in the morning," said Mast, who grew up in the Mennonite tradition and describes the church as "a central part of calling" in Anabaptist theology. During his leave, he read what other Anabaptists wrote and interviewed others in their workplaces.

After his sabbatical, Mast became Bluffton's Pathways Scholar for 2006-07 and began writing the book, for which John Howard Yoder's "Body Politics" proved to be an inspiration. Yoder, in his book, discusses the church's calling today and the world's ultimate calling. Following that model, Mast, in "Go to Church, Change the World," addresses "practices that offer a witness to the surrounding society on how to best live in a truly human set of relationships."

Those practices are not only crucial in church, but they also help determine how you act outside its walls, Mast said. "In order to understand how one ought to act in the marketplace, you root yourself first in the body of Christ, or the church, and that becomes a place of discernment, discussion and conversation," he explained. In addition, he continued, "the church's roles as habit, routine and worship give you leverage for making choices in the workplace."

> *"In order to understand how one ought to act in the marketplace, you root yourself first in the body of Christ, or the church, and that becomes a place of discernment, discussion and conversation."*

At the end of each of the book's chapters, a reflection is provided with questions to provoke thought and discussion. "Go to Church, Change the World" was written in part for Sunday school and Bible study audiences, but more generally, according to Mast, for "people who go to church and are tired of it." The book, he said, is for those who wish to reenergize their beliefs and their relationship with church.

The book is the fifth either written or edited by Mast, who is a member of First Mennonite Church in Bluffton. The Holmes County, Ohio, native is currently vice chair of The Mennonite magazine board and editor of Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History. A Malone College graduate, he holds a Ph.D. in rhetoric and communication from the University of Pittsburgh.

BLUFFTON
BASEBAL

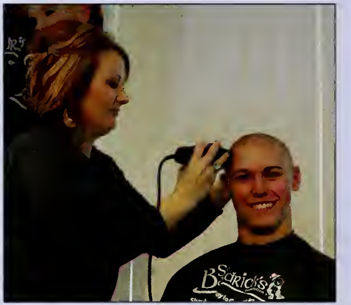
Bluffton baseball offers shear support to kids with cancer

More than 12,000 children and teenagers are diagnosed with cancer every year. On Feb. 29, about 45 Bluffton University baseball players and coaches symbolically showed they care.

Having already raised more than $7,700 in the previous month for the St. Baldrick's Foundation—which funds research for potential childhood cancer cures—the baseball Beavers took their support a step further that day, having their heads shaved in solidarity with young cancer victims.

The mass shearing, courtesy of stylists from The Curling Iron in Bluffton, was the first BaseBald for the Cure event for St. Baldrick's, a Monrovia, Calif.-based charity.

BaseBald was organized two years ago at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill by Chase Jones, a brain cancer survivor. Now working for St. Baldrick's, he is attempting to expand the program by recruiting participating teams.



A freshly shaved Ben Roeschley, from Graymont, Ill., at the BaseBald for the Cure event on Feb. 29.

He sold Bluffton's Aaron Hutchison on the idea when they met at the American Baseball Coaches Association convention in early January. "I really hope we can do this," Hutchison, the Beavers' assistant coach, recalled thinking at the time. "I think our guys will respond well."

And so they did. On the first day of preseason practice, the Beavers set a goal to raise $2,500. Exceeding the goal in less than a week, they doubled it to $5,000. They surpassed that figure and moved the target again, first to $6,500 and then to $7,500—both of which they eclipsed.

"They grasped the idea of helping others," said their head coach, James Grandey, adding that "being able to help younger kids resonated with them."

What Grandey called a "bonus side effect" of the effort has been the chemistry it has helped build among teammates, some of them in friendly competition to raise more money. "It's helped bring us together," Hutchison said.

Among the players who raised the most—$521 each—were roommates Doug Paulin, a sophomore infielder from Jeromesville, Ohio, and junior Matt Calhoun, an outfielder from Bonita Springs, Fla.

Seeking donations from family, Bluffton friends and other friends affected by cancer, Paulin passed his initial goal of $150 in three days. "Once they found out what it was about, it was easy to get the money," he said.

Ben Roeschley, from Graymont, Ill., said his teammates rallied around a good cause, using social media to their benefit. "It took off a lot more than I thought it would," admitted the sophomore pitcher, who raised $128.

Roeschley noted "we'll probably turn some heads when we're in Florida," where the Beavers later traveled for eight spring-break games in Port Charlotte. But people's questions about their shaved heads would enable the players to "spread the awareness" about childhood cancer, he pointed out.

"I needed a haircut," added Roeschley, "but I haven't had it shaved off like this since second grade."

He, and his teammates, had the local stylists to thank for that. The Curling Iron closed for the occasion and even provided small bottles of sunscreen for the players and coaches to pack for Florida.

Guests at the event included, along with his mother and brother, 5-year-old Austin Gallagher of Cleveland Heights, Ohio. Austin, who was diagnosed with bilateral Wilms tumor in 2007 and has had 10 surgeries since, is one of St. Baldrick's five Ambassador Kids in 2012.

"Childhood cancer is filled with darkness and fear," said Austin's mother, Krissy Dietrich Gallagher. "But in the midst of all that darkness, there is a lot of light in days like today."

Author shares love of reading

Jane Kurtz inherited a love of reading from her parents and grandparents, and she has passed it on, not only to her children—and now grandchildren—but also to people she doesn't even know.

Kurtz, a writer, has done it through her children's books, many of them set in Ethiopia, where she grew up. She has also shared her passion through Ethiopia Reads, a nonprofit effort to get books to, and create libraries in, the East African nation.

And on April 3, she urged a Bluffton University audience to follow her lead. "Do not forget the power of just sharing a book with a little kid," she said at the Bluffton Forum commemorating The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center's 25th year on campus.

Born in Portland, Ore.—and now living there again—Kurtz moved to Maji, Ethiopia, with her family when she was 2 years old. It was "a strange and disorienting experience" for her missionary parents, she recalled. But for her, she added, Ethiopia was "a magical place" where, with no television and "outside genes," she was often outdoors exploring African nature.

For her "inside genes," Kurtz credited her mother. "My mom changed our lives," she noted, referring to her sisters and brother, "by turning us into readers and into writers."

Thinking about that in later years turned her thoughts to Ethiopian children who learn to read "but never hold a book," she said. In the last 15 years, she and her brother, Chris, among others, have done something about that through Ethiopia Reads.

Churches and schools that are active in the program collect gently used books and send them to Hesston, Kan., where they're stored until starting the journey to Africa, Kurtz explained. Shipments to Ethiopia also include books written in residents' local languages, said the author, who holds a master's degree from the University of North Dakota and taught there for 10 years.

Children's author Jane Kurtz speaks at the Bluffton Forum celebrating The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center's 25th year.

Once the flow of books started, organizers had to establish places for children to read them, she pointed out. "Some of our libraries are pulled by donkeys," she said, continuing that the animals pull carts full of books and stop under trees where readers gather.

Her goals have included planting a library in every region of the country. The only targeted site not reached so far is Harar, an ancient walled city "with so many stories to be told and so few books," Kurtz said.

As of this year, her brother has begun training Ethiopian teachers about "sharing the love and passion for a book" with students, the author added. "Kids everywhere want the opportunity to read books," which help them see they have the power to tell their own stories, she maintained.

"Stories make us strong," said Kurtz, noting that the stories told by her father, a Presbyterian pastor, helped open up the world to her. "Think about passing it on."

That's what Bluffton's Lion and Lamb center has done for 25 years with art, as well as literature, aimed at promoting peace and justice, cultural understanding and nonviolent responses to conflict, especially among children.

"If we're going to have peace in the world, I think it includes sharing our stories and books," said Kurtz, also the creator of Lanie, a character in the popular American Girl series.

While on the Bluffton campus, she also discussed her books with a group in Musselman Library, and met with education students and local teachers to talk about incorporating multicultural literature in the classroom.

More information about her books is available at www.janekurtz.com/books/index.html.

Bluffton students SERVE in Chicago

Thirty Bluffton University students spent their spring break in Chicago, but they weren't in the Windy City to see its tourist attractions.

From March 4-9, the students—from the campus group SERVE—divided into small groups and worked in inner-city neighborhoods at soup kitchens, churches, nursing homes, outreach centers and a children's after-school program, among other locations.

One stop was the Greater Chicago Food Depository, where a team worked on care packages for community members. "Over the span of two and a half hours, we made 1,280 care packages for the elderly, with a total weight of around 13,500 pounds," Tobin Eicher, a first-year Bluffton student, noted.

Accompanied by Jacklyn Wells, Bluffton's residence life director, and Elizabeth Vaccaro, assistant director of Marbeck Center, the students stayed at the First Church of the Brethren on the city's west side, near their work sites.

In addition to the service aspects of the trip, the students listened to two speakers and participated in devotionals. "We learned of other missions that are in Chicago and some of the things that are being done to lessen the violence in the city," said Peter Crone, a senior and SERVE leader from Shreve, Ohio.

The group watched the documentary "The Interrupters," which Eicher, from Berne, Ind., said showed him a side of Chicago he hadn't seen before. The film focuses on anti-gang violence efforts aimed at bringing peace to the city's streets.

"We really do not realize how good we have it until we hear someone else's story," added Abbey Graber, a sophomore and SERVE leader from Archbold, Ohio.

To raise money for the trip, the team held a bike-a-thon in Marbeck Center using a stationary bike, with Bluffton faculty, staff and students donating to the cause.

Taking a break in the Chicago urban garden they helped prepare for planting season are Bluffton University students (top, left to right) Abbey Graber, Jodi Stutzman and Abbie Richer, along with (bottom, left to right) Derek Davis and Tobin Eicher.

Although the students went to Chicago to help make a change, the city changed them, too, by bringing them closer together. "I loved watching the diversity of our Bluffton group come together as a whole with one sole purpose: serving the Lord," Graber said. "Our time serving during the day and our time of group fellowship in the evenings brought us together like a family."

Eicher added that he particularly appreciated connecting with those he was serving and getting to know them. "One of my favorite things about voluntary service is all the wonderful people it brings you in contact with," he said.

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Getting a divorce is bad, but there are worse things than simply no longer being married.

shrank and finally dissolved completely. She loved me too much to ask me to be someone I wasn't, even though she knew I would have done it for her in a heartbeat. And I loved her too much to ask her to try to change her life when I knew that somewhere in this wide world, there were other men who could give her the happiness she deserved. Neither of us was wrong. We were just no longer on the same path.

I worried how my family would take it. Although I wasn't the first Mennonite I knew to get divorced, my basis of comparison was small. A good friend of the family had had an affair when I was 10 or 11 years old. And my sister had fled her abusive husband just a few years earlier. I didn't have the foggiest idea how to explain a divorce to my family, our friends or our church when there was no abuse, infidelity or even the smallest hint of ill-will between us. And on top of that, I was in the middle of a seminary class on pastoral care. How could I ever expect anyone to trust me to give them good counsel when I couldn't even hold my own marriage together?

We set these questions aside for the time being and went to the courthouse. They gave us a stack of paperwork, and we went home to fill it out. We walked around the house with a legal pad and decided who was taking what. We looked at the bank statements and split our assets. I bought her half of the house so that she could afford to buy a new one. There was no discussion of attorneys. There were no arguments about who got the TV.

As amicable as it was, to call the divorce a crisis of faith for me would be like calling the Grand Canyon a hole in the ground. I've always believed God causes or allows everything to happen for a good reason. What could possibly be the rationale for bringing Valerie and me together only to rip us apart years later? Why would God allow me to waste her time with a relationship that was ultimately going to end?

My guilt is sometimes overwhelming. I want to give her her life back. I owe her a decade I can never repay. My faith tells me I will understand the answers to these questions in time. Until then, I struggle with doubts that threaten my relationship with God at the very time I am trying to be the Christian he so clearly wants me to be.

In November 2010, I moved from Chicago to a small town in Kansas. I bought a farm and started dating a good Mennonite woman. Valerie still lives in Chicago and also dates. We talk almost daily via phone, text or email. When I travel to Illinois to visit, I stay in the guest room of her new house. We remember each other's' birthdays, and her parents and other family members send me cards. We end every conversation by telling each other we love the other. We are each other's best friend and biggest supporter, and I pray to God every day that that will never change.

To call the divorce a crisis of faith for me would be like calling the Grand Canyon a hole in the ground.

I have been asked why we got divorced with all of that being true. My response is simple. We could have stayed married a few more years. We could have continued to try counseling and praying for God to bring a solution. We could have lived simply as housemates and gone about our lives in opposite directions and being married in name only. But given enough time, we would have ended up resenting each other. We would have met people with whom we were more compatible and would have hated each other for being the reason we couldn't pursue those people. Instead of being the two happy people that we are today, each with the potential to meet another person to whom we want to dedicate our lives and form a Christ-centered family, we could have stayed two miserable people.

Years ago in California, a political candidate died of a heart attack a few weeks before Election Day. Her campaign manager decided to continue the campaign absent a living candidate. When asked why, she pointed out that the man against whom they were running was an entrenched, career politician who didn't share the values of his constituency but was re-elected each year using soft money given by massive political interests. Those special interests wanted to have someone who would continue to allow the polluting and unfair business practices to which those industries had become accustomed. Having a dead candidate is bad. But there are worse things than simply no longer being alive.

Getting a divorce is bad. But there are worse things than simply no longer being married.

Eric Litwiller is director of development at The Cedars, Inc., in McPherson, Kan.

Breathing the love of Jesus

Jason Boone is coordinating minister for the Peace and Justice Support Network, a joint ministry of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network. He attends Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

Let's try an experiment. Take a deep breath. Hold it until you have to exhale. When you exhale, do it until you can't exhale anymore and have to take a breath.

Now, having tested both inhaling and exhaling, which is more important? Which could you not live without?

It's not even open to debate; you have to both inhale and exhale to sustain life. One apart from the other is insufficient.

A similar idea is at work in our spiritual lives. Two components work together to sustain us and give us life. One is filling ourselves with the love, peace and joy found only in Jesus. The other is sharing that love, peace and joy with the world around us.

Jesus' perfect balance of inhaling and exhaling is what we strive for not only as individuals but also as a church.

Our body lets us know when it's time to inhale and exhale, keeping us in tune with our natural rhythms. So does our spirit. We may consistently spend time with God in prayer, Scripture and other spiritual disciplines. That's wonderful. Think of that time as inhaling. It feels great to take full, deep breaths. But if we aren't allowing God to work through us in the world as bearers of peace and reconciliation, we're not exhaling. Before long, that breath becomes stale and unsatisfying.

And what if you spend all your time exhaling? Eventually, you run out of breath. What was once a full, satisfying release turns into a sputtering wheeze. So it is when our spirituality is only directed at mission. While mission is central to following Jesus, if it isn't animated by Jesus—when we're out of breath and fighting on our own to keep it going—it's just activity, and unpleasant activity at that.

We compensate by taking big, panting breaths if we've exhaled too long or by exhaling in a short explosion if we've held our breath too long. Maybe you feel out of breath spiritually, so you find a short, intense service project to participate in. Or you withdraw totally from the world to focus on God. There may be some relief in these, but it won't last if you return to only inhaling or only exhaling.

Jesus is our model for keeping inhaling and exhaling in harmony. Scripture tells of Jesus constantly being engaged in teaching and healing and being involved intimately with his community, never turning away from his mission of bringing the kingdom of God to the earth. But he frequently went off by himself to pray, spending nights in communion with God. When he was in prayer, he didn't forget about mission. When he was engaged in mission, he didn't hesitate to stop and pray, calling on God for power to bring healing and peace to whatever situation he faced.

That perfect balance of inhaling and exhaling is what we strive for not only as individuals but also as a church. The tendencies inside each of us are magnified in our collective body. Historically, the body of Christ has at times withdrawn to inward-focused piety while injustice and violence ran roughshod over the powerless. Just as troubling have been periods in which the church has become so engaged in the world that we've seemingly forgotten whom we belong to and with whom our allegiance lies.

God continues to shape the church in the image of Jesus. Taken as a whole, Mennonite Church USA is a fine example of inhaling and exhaling, receiving the love of God into our hearts and spreading that love to others. A concern is that some of us are in a mode of permanent inhale, while others are in permanent exhale. Our task going forward is to find the balance together—for all of us to wear the yoke of Jesus, which is light and easy, and to give ourselves the pleasure of a nice, deep breath, followed by a satisfying exhale.

Let's try another experiment. This time, don't do anything to your breath. Just find it and get a feel for it. Recognize your inhalation and exhalation. Now, when you inhale, pray, "I'm breathing in the love of Jesus." When you exhale, pray, "I'm breathing out the love of Jesus to the world." May we all live in the love of Jesus, in our every breath. TM

A resolution on church statements

As we move toward a position of open (inclusive) communion that invites participation of many who may disagree on other Mennonite "teaching positions" we are challenged to consider what the basic convictions are that we want to be known by.

Confessional statements in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition play a much less defining and authoritative role than in the Roman Catholic Church and in such denominations as Lutheran and Presbyterian. Most U.S. Mennonite groups have taken a less dogmatic view of their confessions of faith. The two Mennonite groups that make up Mennonite Church USA drew up several confessional statements in the 20th century. The Mennonite Church rewrote its confession about every 30 years since 1921 (1963, 1995). And the General Conference Mennonite Church drew up more general statements of beliefs that allowed for variations in local applications.

The 1995 confession was accepted as the basis for merging these two denominations. That it has come to be called a "teaching document" likely derives from its introduction, which states that it "offers an outline for instructing new church members." That phrase suggests more a catechism than a creedal statement. The confession is also said to serve the church as "guidance for belief and practice" and to "provide guidelines for the interpretation of Scripture." Both Scriptural interpretation and belief and practice have changed considerably over the last century, and our confessions have reflected this change.

The statement in Article 19, for example, that marriage is "to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life" restates as a dogmatic teaching (introduced with "We believe") what the 1921 confession merely recorded in order to make the point that marriage is a "divine institution dissoluble only by death" and therefore a total rejection of divorce as human rejection of God's intention. By 1995, divorce was no longer impermissible; the crucial issue had changed. The question now was what God's intention is for marriage and family. What is the nature of the marriage covenant, and who can authentically be married in God's sight? The "one man and one woman" in the 1995 confession has taken on its dogmatic gravity from the controversial circumstances that surrounded its final acceptance as a merger statement. Article 15 of the 1963 confession, "Marriage and the Home," repeated similar words and phrases but is more catechetical, emphasizing different issues.

Whether this particular statement in Article 19 was intended to be an authoritative doctrinal statement is left indefinite. This leaves the meaning of the ambiguous phrase "teaching document" open. On the one hand, the pastoral intention is implicit in the general Mennonite understanding of the authority of confessions. On the other hand, the rarely repeated "We believe," used mostly to introduce the articles, seems to be used intentionally to introduce the marriage section in this multisubject article.

Further, the way the confession is organized into "four sets" seems to make a subliminal distinction between dogmatic and pastoral instruction common in church tradition. The first set of eight articles deals with the basic beliefs shared by the church worldwide. This is the kind of material generally recognized as dogma, that is, truths of unchanging character. Articles 17-23, on the other hand, have to do with "discipleship," an area of much greater latitude, both in belief and practice. The confession itself recognizes this difference in the commentary on Article 19. The "teaching position" that marriage is "for life" recognizes that there are exceptions in applying this teaching: "Today's church needs to uphold the permanency of marriage. … At the same time, the church, as a reconciling and forgiving community, offers healing and new beginnings." Thus divorce, which 74 years earlier was strictly forbidden, becomes allowable.

This kind of distinction has good biblical precedent in the matter of marital and sexual regulations. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul uses this same formulaic pattern. In verse 10, he gives the instruction that forbids divorce. This is the "instruction ("teaching position") of the Lord." But immediately he follows with the exceptions in which divorce may be necessary to keep the peace (vv.12-16), and adds, "It is to peace that God has called you."

The tension is not about views of confessional authority but with the way the church operates in a violent sinful world and how it personifies the peace of Christ. Confessions of faith are merely marks along its path through history. TM

C. Norman Kraus is a member of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

Both Scriptural interpretation and belief and practice have changed considerably over the last century.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Joint board meeting addresses 'martyr complex'

Mennonite Church USA's new office building dedicated on April 14.

Leaders at a joint board meeting on April 14 addressed the "martyr complex" many Mennonites carry—especially ethnic German and Swiss Mennonites—and the consequences of that mind-set.

Boards of most Mennonite Church USA agencies and the Constituency Leadership Council (CLC) gathered at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., after holding separate meetings April 13. Participating groups included the Executive Board, Mennonite Mission Network, MennoMedia, Mennonite Education Agency and The Mennonite, Inc. The Constituency Leaders Council also joined the meeting.

André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness and interchurch relations, and Iris de León-Hartshorn, director for transformative peacemaking, offered presentations on Mennonites' use of 16th-century martyr stories.

De León-Hartshorn told stories to illustrate the victimhood attitudes she observes in white Mennonites—one consequence of the martyr complex.

She told of an interaction with a Lutheran bishop who was confused—even put off—by two gifts she received from Mennonites after a reconciliation ceremony: a copy of *Martyrs Mirror* and a painting of Dirk Willems, the Anabaptist martyr famous for turning around to rescue his pursuer.

> Not only are congregations shutting down but entire denominations are doing so.—Willard Metzger

"If we have a ceremony of reconciliation, why are you giving me a picture of what we did to put on our wall and look at every day?" the Lutheran bishop asked de León-Hartshorn.

"We don't even realize that this is the way we are coming across to other groups," de León-Hartshorn said to the all-boards gathering.

After this incident and others, de León-Hartshorn spoke with professors at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., about Mennonites and "chosen traumas."

She learned that when a group experiences trauma and remains within its homeland, where the abuse occurred, eventually the group can move past the trauma. However, when a group flees its homeland—as many Mennonites did—it takes that trauma with them and "it becomes part of their DNA," she said.

Stoner said that for many Mennonites, the identity as "persecuted victims" is "deep within our psyche," a part of our "founding story."

"How we tell our stories can also reinforce the trauma," he said. "Even 500 years later, this stuff is very powerful."

Stoner outlined three areas this mentality plays out: separatism, quietism and self-righteous victimhood.

First, separatism can be geographic, meaning where Mennonites choose to settle. Separatism also arises in areas of church work and the lack of ecumenical connections.

"We sometimes think that discipleship, peacemaking, community ... this is our stuff," he said.

Stoner said we get anxious if others share similar goals. "[But] this is not a Mennonite thing, folks, this is a Jesus thing," he said.

Stoner also addressed quietism: a lack of voice that victims sometimes demonstrate.

Self-righteous victimhood plays out in two ways, he said: first, at times Mennonites assume non-Mennonites lack the ability to embrace Jesus or the peace witness the way Mennonites do. On the other hand, Mennonites hide behind false humility, saying, "We're just boring Mennonites. Who would want to hang out with us anyway?"

Stoner also described a disconnect in Mennonites between seeing themselves as victims and the power they actually have. "Especially for Swiss-German Mennonites, many of us are pretty privileged," he said.

He went on to suggest two ways to work at this victimhood mentality. First, he refers to himself as a "Mennonite-Christian," in response to a phrase he heard from another leader, " 'Mennonite' is a beautiful adjective and an idolatrous noun."

Second, Stoner hopes to reframe the martyr stories and include stories of other inspirational church leaders. "When we tell the Dirk Willems story, [we could] also tell the Oscar Romero story," he said.

Preceding these presentations, Willard Metzger,

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Annette Brill Bergstresser

Mary Ann Weber (left), managing curriculum editor for MennoMedia, and Marty Lehman, director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA, cut the ribbon as fellow employees look on. At right is Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

'Martyr complex' (continued)

executive director of Mennonite Church Canada, delivered a sermon to the all-boards meeting that morning that addressed the post-Christendom context and paradigm shift in congregational life in Canada and the United States.

"Not only are congregations shutting down but entire denominations are doing so," he said, sharing that in 2033 the Presbyterian church of Scotland plans to close its final congregation.

While this mysterious time creates a need to "reformat and reshape," Metzger also offered encouragement to Mennonites. "Could it be that God moved Anabaptists into North America for such a time as this?" he asked, using a phrase from Esther 4:14. We need Mennonites to demonstrate "gutsy grace" and "sacrificial spirituality," he said.

Later that day, 325 people attended a dedication service at Mennonite Church USA's new office building in Elkhart, Ind. The mortgage on the building is $2.1 million and requires a balloon payment in five years. By the dedication of the building on April 14, Mennonite Mission Network had also loaned $454,314 for the construction of the building. Marty Lehman, the Executive Board's director of churchwide operations, said on April 18 that new contributions received for payment of the debt will be used to repay the Mission Network before paying off the mortgage.—*Anna Groff with Gordon Houser, Serena Townsend*

Ribbon-cutting: Mennonite Church USA leaders gather for the Elkhart, Ind., building dedication on April 14. From left: Peter Wiebe, fund-raising campaign co-chair; Carlos Romero, executive director for Mennonite Education Agency; Stanley Green, executive director for Mennonite Mission Network; Dick Thomas, Mennonite Church USA moderator; Marty Lehman, director of operations for the Executive Board; Ervin Stutzman, Executive Board's executive director; Wilbur Bontrager, campaign co-chair; Everett Thomas, editor of *The Mennonite.*

Volunteers extend reach of MC USA archives

Sixteen volunteers 'essential part' of denominational historical ministry

Photo provided

Archives volunteer Don Blosser of College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., and archivist Colleen McFarland discuss his project of organizing a set of congregational records at the Goshen archives.

Retiree Stan Voth of Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan., used to work in a historical library and archives. Goshen (Ind.) College senior Tillie Yoder is considering doing so. Both are volunteers at the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee's archives—Voth in North Newton and Yoder in Goshen.

Voth, Yoder and 14 other volunteers are an essential part of the denomination's historical ministry, says Goshen archivist Colleen McFarland. The archives have a staff full-time equivalency of less than five.

"Without our volunteers, we simply could not keep up with all of the work required to keep an archival program of this size in operation," she says."Our ability to connect with thousands of people worldwide is largely possible because of the labor of our dedicated volunteers."

The two archives house the official records of Mennonite Church USA's churchwide agencies and their General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church predecessors. The archives also have material from congregations, area conferences, church-related organizations and individuals. The combined holdings number 20 million documents, photos and audio and video recordings. Each year, the two archives receive more than 1,000 research requests from around the globe.

Most volunteers are older and retired, like Voth. But Yoder, a 21-year-old history and English major at Goshen College, interned at the Goshen archives last fall and came back this spring to "get more of a feel for it, so when I do go to grad school, I have better grounding."

Yoder is assisting archival staff in finding photos for a historical presentation. "I like digging through all sorts of things," she says.

Voth, a former employee in the North Newton archives, is the longest-tenured volunteer in North Newton, having served since 1991. He initially helped organize materials, including those from his parents, William C. and Matilda Voth, longtime missionaries in China and Japan. Voth, who was born and raised in China, learned much from the correspondence between his parents and the General Conference Mennonite Church mission board. "You realize there are a lot of headaches, and it's not all easy sliding along," says Voth, whose sister, Helen Bertrand, also volunteers in the North Newton archives.

Goshen volunteer Nelda Nussbaum of Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, also made a family connection. She found letters from her grandfather, David D. Zehr, a bishop at Manson, Iowa, who died before she was born. Nussbaum started volunteering at the archives after seeing a notice in her church bulletin asking for volunteers. "I thought, Sounds interesting, and I'm interested in history," she says.

But learning about the past isn't the only education for many of the volunteers. Technological advances have made it possible to serve researchers who may never set foot in the Goshen or North Newton archives. So volunteers who didn't even grow up with television have had to develop computer proficiency.

When she started 21 years ago, Nussbaum's first responsibilities were sorting photographs and labeling files. Now she is one of three volunteers in Goshen entering information into an online database that describes the records and manuscript collections in the two archives (https://mla.bethelks.edu/archon/).

> Our ability to connect with thousands of people worldwide is largely possible because of the labor of our dedicated volunteers.—Colleen McFarland

Voth has spent the last several years putting into a computer database obituaries from the *Bundesbote*, a North American Mennonite German-language periodical published until 1947.

Another Goshen volunteer, Thelma Martin, maintains one of the Historical Committee's most successful initiatives: MennObits, an online collection of more than 82,000 obituaries, primarily from *Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite.—Rich Preheim for Mennonite Church USA*

Southern ministry on front lines of changes

Mennonite Service Center destination in Mississippi for SOOP volunteers

Photo provided

Larry and Maxine Miller have been doing domestic missions for more than 40 years in Mississippi. Their Mennonite Service Center helps Mashulaville residents in many ways.

Arriving in the steamy climate of the unfamiliar Deep South in 1965, the young man from northern Indiana was eager to serve domestically, just like the Service Opportunities for Older People (SOOP) volunteers he welcomes to his ministry today.

But to a then-19-year-old Larry Miller, Mississippi was more like a mission assignment in a foreign land.

Larry had arrived in Mashulaville, Miss., from Topeka, Ind., to fulfill his Civilian Public Service obligation as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War.

Serving at the Choctaw Indian mission established by Mennonites years earlier, Larry soon came face-to-face with legal segregation and overt white oppression of Native Americans and blacks.

Larry found himself in the midst of the struggle, like the time he was the lone white person at the front of a black march for voting rights.

"I was the white target on the front line. 'Grab the white boy and put him up front,' they said. I actually thought it was fun," Miller says with a chuckle. "Until I saw those piercing eyes and the drooling mouths of the Klan holding ax handles. No mission board ever really prepared us for that."

It was 1969 when a young Maxine Miller joined her newly wedded husband in the South. After taking a few years off after high school in Indiana, she had discovered her call was to teach. The local Noxubee County school board had other plans, though.

"At that time it was an all-white school board, and they didn't look that kindly on our activities [helping the Choctaws and black residents]," Maxine says. "They came right out and said, "You're Yankees and you're Mennonites and you're not getting a job here." Eventually, God changed things through the civil rights movement.

After more than 40 years of marriage, three grown children and retiring after 25 years of teaching, the Millers are still on this domestic mission together. Their nonprofit Mennonite Service Center provides a variety of services, including nutritious meals, adult and youth tutoring, and health and human service advocacy for locals, regardless of race. For the past three years, the center has been associated with SOOP, a Mennonite Mission Network program that provides adults and families with service opportunities.

Mashulaville is a small community outside Macon, Miss., in Noxubee County. The county's population is about 12,000, 70 percent of whom are black. Hundreds of years before Europeans arrived, the Choctaws farmed the land, until they were forcibly removed by the U.S. government in 1830 in what is known as the Trail of Tears.

Mennonites arrived in Mashulaville in the early 1960s, establishing the Choctaw Indian mission, where Larry served from 1965 to 1969. He took people to the doctor, helped with the boys and girls clubs and taught Sunday school.

Larry's late parents, Andrew and Sara Miller, moved to Mashulaville and began a children's home in 1967, which has evolved to the current center. The Mashulaville Dormitory building, a nearly 100-year-old former schoolhouse, is where the summer program is held.

"Mashulaville is a very poor community. We have virtually no industry in the county," Maxine says. "Unemployment is nearly 20 percent."

The Millers share the gospel through building relationships and meeting people's needs as best they can.

"When people are needing a friend, it doesn't matter what color they are," Larry says.

Times have changed for the better. Larry recalls a Klan meeting a couple of years ago where so few Klan members showed up that they were outnumbered by police.

"**The change is almost unbelievable** that we're actually rejecting overt racism, ... but the scary part is that we still have racially divided schools in all our black-majority counties," Larry says. "Our children always attended public schools here. White people in Noxubee don't send their kids to the public schools at all. This is appalling to me."

"It has been a good life," Maxine says. "We've faced dangers. It hasn't always been comfortable, but I think about the relationships we've had with the black community in our neighborhood here. They protected our family. I'm really grateful for that."—*Wil LaVeist for Mennonite Mission Network*

New trailer can sleep 18 volunteers

Ear plugs, 44 square feet of living space for disaster service workers

Melanie Hess

After the dedication service, Landis Homes residents tour one section of the MDS trailer. Bunk beds for nine people line the walls; the section also contains shower and toilet facilities.

On April 4, Mennonite Disaster Service dedicated its new trailer at Landis Homes Retirement Communities in Lititz, Pa. The trailer, which can sleep as many as 18 people, is on its way to West Liberty, Ky., where tornadoes damaged homes, businesses and other buildings on March 2.

The trailer, said Kevin King, MDS's director, is the result of years of dreaming that came to fruition when a donor gave $10,000 toward the project and asked if the residents of Landis Homes could match that amount. They matched it and more, raising $27,000 to build the trailer, at which point the generous donor added another $3,000 to top the total off at $40,000. The estimated overall cost of the trailer will be approximately $90,000.

2011 was a historic year for tornadoes and a historic year for MDS responses, which made the need for a trailer even more urgent. Over 5,900 MDS volunteers worked over 26,357 days at MDS projects last year.

The trailer is needed, King said, because when MDS volunteers enter a community torn by disaster, they need a place to sleep—but they are competing for beds and showers with actual residents of the community who may not have homes to which they can return. Church basements, which often don't have sprinklers or proper exits, aren't usually up to code for housing.

The trailer provides a home for volunteers, with two separate sections that sleep nine people each, along with three showers, dressing rooms, two restrooms, a utility room and two sinks.

The trailer is 51 feet long, with 44 feet of livable space, can be connected to an exterior generator and hooks in to local utilities in much the same way an RV would. Additionally, each section of the trailer has an earplug dispenser.

The short dedication service included a slide show of the Kentucky community where the trailer is headed, pictures and descriptions of the trailer being built, and ended with a prayer of dedication.

Attendees then walked outside to view the trailer, hitched to a Ford F550 pickup truck. During the dedication service, King asked residents to sign their names or add words of blessing or Scripture verses to several pieces of plywood that serve as bunk supports in the trailer, so that after a day of work, tired volunteers can see the words of encouragement above them as they fall asleep.

The trailer was built by M.H. Eby, Blue Ball, Pa., and Haller Enterprises did all the HVAC, plumbing and electrical work on the trailer, which had to be outfitted for weather from "Minot to Miami," King said.

In Kentucky, the trailer will be parked at the West Liberty Mennonite Church, which sustained only minimal damage during the March storms.—*Melanie Hess for* The Mennonite

Mennonite
Disaster
Service

MDS photo

The bunkhouse trailer near completion.

Commissioning launches MCC's new purpose

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and Canada to jointly carry out mission.

Silas Crews

Don Peters, left, executive director of MCC Canada, and J. Ron Byler, executive director of MCC U.S., take the bowls that symbolize mutual cooperation between the two MCCs into the audience for a blessing. Byler is handing his bowl to Robert Kreider, who served with MCC over a period of 42 years.

"A cloud of witnesses" gathered March 30 at Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church to observe the commissioning of Mennonite Central Committee Canada and MCC U.S. for a new era of ministry.

The two organizations now jointly carry out MCC's mission, purpose and vision and administer MCC's international program, which previously was directed by the binational MCC organization that was officially dissolved earlier that day.

MCC binational executive director Arli Klassen said, "We will continue to do front-line, compassionate work around the world. We're just changing how we support that work internally and making it a stronger partnership between Canada and the U.S."

Participants in the commissioning event encouraged MCC to draw strength for the future from the cloud of witnesses who serve and have served God through MCC, an inference drawn from Hebrews 12:1-2a.

The audience was full of those witnesses, including long-term MCC workers, donors and volunteers from the many Anabaptist denominations that sponsor MCC, representatives of the church in Africa and Mennonite World Conference, pastors and church leaders, and staff and board members from Canada and the United States.

The commissioning service culminated a five-year revisioning and restructuring process called New Wine/New Wineskins: Reshaping MCC for the 21st Century. The process stretched around the globe, and its conclusions were affirmed by sponsoring denominations and the 12 MCC boards in Canada and the United States.

The revisioning process brought about a new purpose statement that guides the work of MCC. In addition, MCC clearly identifies itself as an arm of the Anabaptist churches in Canada and the United States and as a partner with Mennonite churches and their relief organizations around the world.

The restructuring process equalized the decision-making power and administrative work of MCC Canada and MCC U.S. by creating a legally, jointly owned international program. Together leaders in both countries will direct the relief, development and peace work that identifies MCC.

The cooperative relationship was symbolized during the service, when representatives of the sponsoring denominations in Canada and the United States gave bowls and towels to Don Peters, executive director of MCC Canada, and J. Ron Byler, executive director of MCC U.S. Byler and Peters then exchanged the bowls and towels and embraced.

"I hope that what we have symbolized today and what we've worked hard to create in a productive partnership between MCC Canada and MCC U.S. we will be able to fulfill going forward in a way that we're literally joining arms to work at fulfilling the mission of MCC," said Peters after the event.

The restructuring process was not without pain. While many former binational positions were transferred to either MCC U.S. or MCC Canada and some new positions added, 31 former binational staff, most of whom worked in Akron, lost jobs.

> I hope that … we will be able to fulfill going forward in a way that we're literally joining arms to work at fulfilling the mission of MCC.—Don Peters

This pain and the sadness that accompanies change was recognized through a prayer of confession and in the ragged pieces of cloth, collected from countries where MCC works, that were woven into a rug during the service. The completed rug was brought into the sanctuary as the Rev. Leonard Dow, vice chair of the MCC U.S. board, prayed: "Out of our aging fabrics, weave new hope. Out of strands, weave a fabric, a tapestry. Out of the parts, weave a whole."*—Linda Espenshade of Mennonite Central Committee*

Peace after a decade of fighting

Filipino Mennonites join indigenous tribes to reaffirm kinship.

Byron Pantoja from Coffee for Peace and Peacebuilders Community, Inc.

Bangsamoro and Indigenous Tribes of Mindanao gather together to begin the Reaffirmation of Kinship Ceremony.

The sound of the tambol drums greeted participants as they entered the Talaandig Ancestral Site in Sungku, Mindanao, Philippines, on March 8. The long dirt road was lined with flags, each representing a different tribe of Mindanao in honor of the guests who had come for the historic Reaffirmation of Kinship Ceremony between the Bangsamoro (Muslim nation) and Lumad (indigenous) tribes of Mindanao.

For the first time in 492 years, 13 Bangsamoro tribes came together with 18 non-Islamized indigenous tribes to reaffirm their shared ancestry and commit to the five pillars of kinship established in the traditional peace pact of their ancestors: cooperation, mutual sharing of information, mutual protection of life, recognition and respect, and mutual obligation to help the needy. These tribes, many who have spent the last decade fighting one another, chose to come together to not only acknowledge their shared ancestry but commit themselves to respect and protect one another.

The Kinship Pact comes at a critical time for the Philippines. The Aquino administration and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) find themselves on the cusp of a signed peace agreement that recognizes a Bangsamoro sub-state and autonomy within the region. Similar negotiations have failed in the past, due in part to the animosity between the indigenous and the Bangsamoro tribes. As the tribes join together to uphold their historic peace pact, they are preparing the way not only for a signed agreement between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the MILF but also for sustainable peace in Mindanao.

"It is very important to reaffirm our kinship, which has not been nurtured in the past. We have seen the cracks in the past between our tribes," said Attorney Raissa Jajurie, the first woman consultant to the MILF peace panel. "Today, we want to see equality and mutual respect. It is time to heal the wounds of our past."

The Reaffirmation of Kinship Ceremony is a culmination of several years of work, relationship-building and visioning among Lumad, Bangsamoro and civil society leaders. Since the failure of the MOA-AD (Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain) in 2008, due in part to conflicting views between the indigenous and Bangsamoro communities and lack of direct indigenous participation in the formal peace talks between the MILF and GPH in Kuala Lumpur, key organizers have worked to heal the wounds of the past and lay a solid foundation for peace.

Peacebuilders Community, Inc., a Filipino Mennonite organization based in Davao City, has played an important role in making the Reaffirmation of Kinship Ceremony possible through their longstanding partnership with Mindanao People's Caucus, the key coordinating organization of the event. Peacebuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI), is a fellowship of conflict transformation specialists who are dreaming and working for a just, radical and active nonviolent transformation of the Philippines. Started by Canadian-Filipino missionaries Dann and Joji Pantoja, with the support of Mennonite Church Canada, PBCI has spent the last decade building relationships with

Byron Pantoja

A young Talaandig woman joins the Reaffirmation of Kinship Ceremony.

Byron Pantoja

Datu (Chief) Victorino Saway of the Talaandig Tribe embraces professor Abud Sayed Lingga, a senior member of the MILF peace panel, after they have exchanged precious tokens of kinship.

key community leaders and stakeholders, training community leaders in peacebuilding and reconciliation and engaging the Christian community throughout the Philippines in building peace in Mindanao.

Though the Ceremony of Kinship brought together Lumad and Bangsamoro tribes, the presence of the Christian community also played an important role in upholding the renewed relationship between the "first nations" of Mindanao and acknowledging the voice of the first nations. Sister Arnold Maria Noel, a Catholic nun who has played a prominent role in building peace in Mindanao for the last decades, emphasized the importance of the Christian community to support the work of the first-nation tribes to rebuild their relationships and establish a unified and powerful voice in Mindanao.

"We have the responsibility to tell this story, to spread this story to the international community," she said. "As Christians, we must allow space for the truth to come forward."

As the introductions began, the tribal leaders gave impassioned speeches about why they had traveled to take part in this historic ceremony.

"We must set aside our interests and re-emphasize our kinship. We must walk together toward peace in Mindanao. We are answerable to Allah, to one another, to our future generations," said Salic Ibrahim, a Maranao leader, and called those present to live out the kinship pact—to pave the way toward peace.

"This event confirms the support of the individual tribes for the peace process and is a key factor in stabilizing the region. Without stability, peace cannot move forward," said Walee Roslie, a member of the International Monitoring Team from Brunei.

One by one, the leaders of each tribe went forward to retell their history. The descendants of the original peace pact holders call us the tribes to once again unite as kin, they said, to protect one another and to help build a new Mindanao based on the ancient practices of their ancestors. "I normally see myself as an educator," LTC Ronald Alcudia from the government's Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said, "but today I am a student. I am learning of the history of Mindanao from the true tribal elders—a history I did not know until today."

Datu (Chief) Victorino Migketay Saway, the host and visionary of the reaffirmation of kinship, called forward the religious leaders and elders to begin prayers. Indigenous and Bangsamoro together joined in prayer for their people, calling on Allah, the ancestors and Magbabaya to be present in the ceremony.

As the prayers came to an end, the tribal elders moved forward and prepared to sacrifice a Carabao in honor of the ancestors. The blood of the Carabao is used to cleanse the land of the ancestors—to heal the wounds of the past so that all the tribes, together with their ancestors and their God—may move together toward a future of peace in Mindanao.

Datu Saway called the descendants of the peace pact forward to sign their names, committing to the five pillars of kinship. PBCI, along with other key civil society organizations were also called forward as witnesses. The tribes, adorned in their traditional regalia, gathered together as the Talaandig monument memorializing the kinship pact was revealed: an intricately carved jar, the vessel that will hold the sacred oil and covenant of kinship.

Though the ceremony marks a historic step toward peace, the road to peace is long and relationships are still fragile. This new union, between the historically marginalized tribes of the Bangsamoro and the Lumad (indigenous) requires support and recognition, not only from the people of the Philippines but also from the wider international community. As witnesses, PBCI, representing the larger Mennonite church, helped create a space for truth, for the history of the first nations to come forward, giving rise to a new, unified voice in Mindanao.

That day, PBCI, along with 1,000 other key stakeholders, witnessed the beginning of a new chapter in Mindanao's history, as the Moro and the IP's came together to uphold the ancient kinship of their ancestors and acknowledge the traditional peace pacts made long before the colonial era. The ceremony marked a new way forward for peace in Mindanao—a peace built on a 400-year-old relationship—a relationship that the first nations of Mindanao have embraced once more.
—Angela J. Lederach

Indigenous Panamanians killed in land conflict

Mennonite World Conference churches ask for solidarity from global church.

Several deaths following a March 30 confrontation between indigenous people and loggers in eastern Panama has heightened the concern of Mennonites involved in peace and justice initiatives in their country as they call for prayer and solidarity from their global community of faith.

The recent incident involved members of the Wounaan community from Platanares confronting people who were cutting down valuable and endangered hardwood cocobolo trees, even though such logging had been officially suspended by the national environmental authority. The clash resulted in the death of Aquilo Opúa, from the Wounaan community, and Ezequiel Batista, a tractor operator with the loggers.

Opúa was the leader of the community of Platanares. He was also a brother-in-law of Hermes Barrigón, a leader in Iglesia Evangélica Unida Hermanos Menonitas de Panamá (United Evangelical Church, Mennonite Brethren), a Mennonite World Conference member church. While Opúa was not a member of the church, he was in the process of searching for faith in this critical situation and thankful for the church involvement.

According to Alina Itucama, Iglesia Evangélica Unida Hermanos Menonitas does not have a specific peace and justice ministry. However, many of its churches are located in communities affected by conflicting land claims.

Members of the church have created a website called Injusticia en Panama (Injustice in Panama) with a call for a "peaceful resolution to decades of conflict over lands that have been promised to the indigenous peoples of Panama." (See http://injusticiaenpanama.org and http://injusticeinpanama.wordpress.com.)

Other organizations, such as Servicio de Paz y Justicia en Panama (Peace and Justice Service in Panama), are helping spread information, but the church is not directly involved with this organization.

The leadership of the Wounaan people includes members of Iglesia Evangélica Unida, for example, Rito Ismare, president of the National Congress of the Wounaan People; Diogracio Puchicama, spokesperson for the Wounaan people in the east of Panama; Félix Piraza, regional leader for the Wounaan people; and Leonides Quiróz, legal adviser for the Wounaan Congress.—*Ron Rempel of Mennonite World Conference*

Vietnamese pastor sentenced to prison

Former independent Mennonite convicted of 'undermining national solidarity'

A former independent Mennonite pastor in Vietnam on March 26 was sentenced to 11 years in prison after being convicted of "undermining national solidarity" by the Gia Lai provincial People's Court in Pleiku.

Nguyen Cong Chinh, also known as Nguyen Thanh Long, 43, has long been harassed by the security police in Kon Tum and Gia Lai provinces in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Chinh was arrested on April 28, 2011, four days after Easter, and detained until trial. He was charged under Article 87 of the Penal Code.

According to the *Saigon Giai Phong* (Liberation) newspaper, at trial Chinh confessed to the crime of propaganda against the State of Vietnam, proclaiming himself "pastor in charge of the Highlands Mennonite Protestants," and "engaging in tactics to entice ethnic minorities into wrongdoing." The official Vietnamese News Agency reported that he continued these activities even though he was repeatedly warned. His sentence will be reviewed by a higher court.

Although religious groups have been granted greater freedom in recent years, the government has implemented stricter policies among the ethnic minorities it fears might threaten political solidarity. During the past decade many Evangelical Christian congregations among the ethnic minorities have been granted full legal status by the government.

In July 2003, Chinh attended a Mennonite conference in Ho Chi Minh City along with Christians from the Jarai ethnic minority.

When the Mennonite Church divided into two groups in late 2004, Chinh related closely with the Vietnam Evangelical Mennonite Church, then under the leadership of Nguyen Hong Quang. When Chinh built an unauthorized place of meeting for his church in Kon Tum, it was soon destroyed by the authorities.

Over the next few years, Chinh attempted to bring Christians from several ethnic minorities into a broad fellowship. When disciplined by the church in 2008 for inappropriate conduct and stripped of his leadership role, Chinh announced that he was resigning from the Mennonite Church and reported that he was leader of the United Montagnard Christian Church, headquartered in Pleiku.—*Luke S. Martin for Mennonite World Conference*

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Financial strains continue for Executive Board

Mennonite Health Services Alliance may become fifth MC USA agency.

The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) met April 12-13 in Goshen, Ind., and held conversations with the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) and the board of The Mennonite, Inc., on April 13 (see related story on page 32).

Executive director Ervin Stutzman presented his report to the board on April 12, following the outline of the Purposeful Plan, which seeks to support the seven priorities of Mennonite Church USA.

He reported that the austerity measures put in place for EB staff have worked well, but now they face further challenges: The new office building (see page 33) has increased office expenses by $12,000, Mennonite Central Committee's decision to remove its archives from the Mennonite Church USA's archives in Goshen will decrease revenue by over $30,000, and health-care and information technology costs are also rising.

Sustaining the current staff and work of EB will require raising funds, said Stutzman.

He also reported on plans for future conventions. After Phoenix 2013, the 2015 convention will be held in Kansas City, Mo. The site for 2017 has yet to be decided. In fall meetings of EB and CLC, Stutzman said, he hopes to look at questions about whether or not to continue a two-year cycle of conventions as well as cost and location factors.

EB invited Rick Stiffney, CEO of Mennonite Health Services Alliance, to address the board on the question of whether or not MHS Alliance should become an agency of Mennonite Church USA. It is now an entity. The board plans to make a recommendation at its fall meeting.

On April 13, EB met with CLC to discuss its role in looking at possible resolutions at least four months ahead of biennial assemblies.

CLC could help shape or even decide whether or not to proceed with a resolution, since it represents all conferences of the church.

They also looked at the relationship between the area conferences and the national conference. Table groups discussed these questions and reported back to EB.

No decisions about these areas will be made before CLC meets in the fall.—*Gordon Houser with reporting by Anna Groff*

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500 Mennonites, Amish join Christian cruise

Sail and Sing Christian Cruise popular, ventriloquist plans for next year

Photo provided

Ryan Bomgardner performs during the Sail and Sing Christian Cruise in February.

On Feb. 27, 500 Mennonites, Amish and other Anabaptists from all over North America gathered on a Carnival cruise ship in Miami, Fla.

"I had hoped for 250 people, but we ran out of cabins within about four months, so we quickly got more," says Ryan Bomgardner, who organized the cruise.

Bomgardner, a Christian ventriloquist who has performed on Christian cruises for more than six years, was the master of ceremony and "comic relief" on this Sail and Sing Christian Cruise.

After hearing multiple requests from Mennonites on other cruises, Bomgardner decided to put together "a vacation experience where Mennonites, Amish and other Anabaptists from around the world could get together and fellowship and be refreshed physically and spiritually."

Participants included "black bumper," "horse and buggy," Canadian, Russian and Mexican Mennonites, in addition to Amish, Brethren and other denominations.

One woman "had only months to live," Bomgardner says. "She wanted to go on this Christian cruise before she passed away."

A young couple experiencing health issues also went on the cruise, and "they touched some people who then anonymously paid for both their trips" for the 2013 Sail and Sing Christian Cruise.

The five-day cruise from Miami to Key West, Fla., and Cozumel, Mexico, included Christian concerts, games, breakout sessions and a marriage seminar.

Besides Ryan and Friends, the mostly Mennonite performers included The Stutzman Family, John Schmid, The Coblentz Family, Lucas Hitch, By Grace, and Anthony Ray.

The cruise, says Bomgardner, "went so well, it's now planned to be an annual thing."

Next year, Sail and Sing will travel from Seattle to Alaska and British Columbia, and in 2014 to the Bahamas.—*Serena Townsend, intern for* The Mennonite

Sister Care breaks new ground with translation

First-time seminar uses materials and presentation translated into Spanish.

More than 130 women gathered for training and fellowship at Souderton (Pa.) Mennonite Church March 23-24. The Sister Care seminar, developed by Mennonite Women USA, was sponsored by Eastern District and Franconia conferences as part of their continuing work to equip and train congregational leaders.

Souderton's Sister Care seminar was groundbreaking for Mennonite Women USA; it was the first time the seminar used materials translated into Spanish. Spanish-speaking participants were also equipped with translation headsets.

As a result, the seminar was well-attended by Spanish-speaking members of Philadelphia Praise Center, Nueva Vida Norristown (Pa.) New Life, First Mennonite Church of Brooklyn, and Mennonite Evangelistic Tabernacle, New York City.

Sister Care seminar materials were translated and contextualized by Wanda Gonzalez Coleman, New Holland, Pa. The Souderton seminar was translated by Chantelle Silverio.

"Mi grupo de mujeres quedaron muy contentas en su primera experiencia y ya estamos planeando como pober en practica las herramientas que se nis dio en el taller [My group of women were very happy with their first experience and we are already planning how to put into practice the tools that we were given at the seminar]," says Leti Cortes, a pastor at Philadelphia Praise Center. "Están tan animadas que estamos pensando en un retiro de mujeres y usar algunas dinámicas que nos ayudaron a poder expresar lo que hemos vivido, espero le sirva este mensaje [They are so encouraged that we are thinking about having a women's retreat and using some of the group activities that help us express what we have lived]."

Sister Care was born out of a 2006 question to Mennonite women: How can congregations provide better care for women's needs?—*Emily Ralph for Mennonite Women USA*

Naming what unites us

Nation: Not all interpretations of Scripture are inspired by Holy Spirit.

Menno Simons is justly famous for providing a summary of the Christian faith in a treatise whose title is taken from the opening words of one of the sentences: "For true evangelical faith is of such nature it cannot lie dormant." The remainder of the paragraph that ensues, like most of Menno's writings, is wonderfully holistic.

It is impossible to read much of Menno without sensing his zeal for the gospel of Jesus Christ, his passion for a loving God, a God whose desire is to redeem all of humanity through his redemptive power. Menno boldly names that faith in—and personal knowledge of—God releases us from our self-centered bondage, liberating us from unhealthy lusts and desires in order to love God and others. The Spirit of God empowers us to serve God, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, comfort those who sorrow, reach out to the wounded, become all things to all people. The wondrous love of God makes even self-sacrificial discipleship a joy to embody. All this, for Menno, is rooted in the body of Christ, a people covenanted together to encourage, teach and admonish each other with the Word of the Lord.

My summary of Menno is simply one way of naming what I've seen as one of the glories of the Anabaptist tradition: a holistic understanding of the heart of the Christian faith.

Members of the household of God: John Rempel's essay "Naming What Divides Us" (February) provided me with the impetus to share my growing conviction that it is every bit as important to name carefully what "unites us" as it is to name what divides us. To put it differently, I fear that if we name what is central to the Christian life too neatly or simply, that is, without enough spiritual depth and breadth, it will distort how we name what divides us.

> I fear that if we name what is central to the Christian life too neatly or simply, that is, without enough spiritual depth and breadth, it will distort how we name what divides us.

I was reminded of this recently when I was assigned to preach from Ephesians 2:11-22. I assumed that one of the reasons I was assigned this text was because it highlights reconciliation and unity. These emphases were indeed important, given that my sermon was to open a day-and-a-half conference that focused on same-sex relations in the context of the church. The text is, in fact, a needed reminder that Christ has "broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us" (v. 14). We have been made "one new humanity … thus making peace" (v. 15).

This is truly wonderful, powerful and liberating good news.

But the call to unity and reconciliation needs to be seen in the context of the whole of the passage (Ephesians 2:11-22) and within the rest of the letter to the church at Ephesus. At the outset of the passage, for instance, Paul reminds the Ephesians that the Gentiles need to "remember that you were at that time without Christ" (v. 12). "All of us," he says, "once lived among them [i.e. the disobedient] in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses" (2:3). By God's wondrous grace, says Paul, we are being made new in Christ, "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (2:10).

The passage (2:11-22) ends with Paul's reminder to the Gentiles that although they had been "strangers and aliens," they are now "citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God" growing together "into a holy temple of the Lord" (2:19, 21). Much of the rest of the letter is spent elaborating on what it means to be "members of the household of God." The implications are far-reaching, encompassing the whole of life, individually and corporately.

We are now to be "imitators of God" to "live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (5:1-2). Living in the love of God, Paul says, means that "you must no longer live as the Gentiles live" (4:17). More specifically, Paul implores: "Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (5:5).

All of this is specifying some of what Paul means when he says, I "beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1-3). These are vital reminders in light of which we must always live our lives, so that we do not mistake ourselves for God.

Nevertheless, we are also cautioned not to be "tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine" (4:14). We are not simply invited by Paul to agree to disagree in love. Rather we are to be "speaking the truth in love" because "we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (4:15). None of this is easy, which is precisely why Paul says we need to "take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (6:13).

A holistic sense of the Scriptures' call to discipleship: I have become convinced over the last several years that a pattern similar to what I've summarized from Ephesians is present in (at least virtually) every letter of the New Testament. And it fits quite well with what is said in the Gospels and in Acts. It is what I see echoed in Menno and other 16th-century Anabaptist writers. It was a part of what led me to become Mennonite.

Aaron Kauffman, one of my students, has called this "the prepositional truth of the gospel." As he puts it: "We are saved by Jesus Christ from a life of sin for a new way of life lived in a new community of unity and peace, empowered through the Spirit to stand against the ways of darkness in order to bless the whole world."

Such a theologically holistic pattern helps us see the Scriptures and the Christian life differently. And we see contentious issues differently.

We don't imagine, for instance, that the Gospels are the only place where we turn for discipleship or ethics. Neither are Paul's letters peculiarly where we turn for spirituality or grace. No, this holistic message weaves itself throughout the New Testament.

Furthermore, we recognize the Old Testament roots of this holistic pattern. In fact, we notice that the earthy faith portrayed in the Old Testament can serve as a corrective to our too frequently Gnostic (i.e., disembodied, overspiritualized) approach to our faith.

The opening of Romans 12, for instance, reminds us that our "bodies" are to be given "as a living sacrifice," which is our "spiritual worship" (12:1). So offering our bodies will cause us, as Paul says, not to be "conformed to this world" (12:2).

This language of sacrifice and holiness may lead us to see connections to the book of Leviticus. Recent scholarship has shown that the earthy details of Leviticus are rightly seen as the integration of worship and ethics. Jesus quoted from the book of Leviticus for the second half of the greatest commandment: "love your neighbor as yourself" (19:18). Additionally, the repeated refrain in Leviticus, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy," resonates with the emphases not only in the Sermon on the Mount or in Romans 12 and 1 Peter but also to similar emphases in the Anabaptist tradition.

Three other matters that also appear in Leviticus 19 are worthy of mention. Several of the Ten Commandments are reiterated in this chapter. Some of the strongest words about social justice in the whole of Scripture appear in this chapter and in Leviticus 25: words regarding caring for the poor, caring for aliens and rendering just judgments. Granted, it is also in Leviticus 19 where the Israelites are told not to sow a field with two different kinds of seed or to wear garments made of two different kinds of materials (v. 19).

So how do we distinguish which of these teachings guide our faithful living? Here are two long-standing, honored approaches:

1. to note whether and in what ways such teaching is reaffirmed in the New Testament and
2. to discern how the teaching has been affirmed or challenged by ongoing tradition.

Christians rightly saw, using both criteria, that caring for the poor ought to be carried out by any faithful Christian tradition. Applying the same criteria, concern about two kinds of seed or mixed garments mostly dropped out of Christian practice. (Neither was affirmed by the New Testament or the early church fathers. In fact, Paul's writings can be seen to challenge such practices.)

Teachings about sexual practices in Leviticus 18 and 20 have been seen historically in the category with concern for the poor rather than with the teaching regarding two different kinds of seed. This is partly because the teachings are reaffirmed in many, varied and central ways throughout the New Testament. The early church fathers and Menno Simons also confirm these teachings.

Our fundamental identity is in Christ, not in political parties or any other allegiance than Christ.

A third way: I am grateful that we as Mennonites know that reconciliation and loving relationships are inherent in the gospel. I am grateful that we are committed, as a body, to loving our enemies in the way we live our lives. Furthermore, I am grateful we care about social justice and that we know this includes caring for the poor.

However, because our fundamental identity is in Christ, none of these commitments should cause us to lose sight of the richness, the depth and breadth of the biblical teachings, including those concerning righteous and holy living. The beauty of holiness compels the New Testament writers repeatedly to warn against sexual immorality. It is the only vice to appear in the majority of vice lists in the New Testament. Is it named so prominently in the New Testament as a moral concern because moral living is inherent in the good news, the gospel?

Once we begin to see the heart of the Christian life differently, more holistically, we can't simply ask whether our stance on a contentious issue comports with grace or inclusion, "aligning ourselves with God's love" or justice or any other singularly named concern. Rather, we ask whether and in what ways it fits with a more holistic understanding of the heart of the Christian life.

This does make things a bit more complex. Is God—the God known in Jesus Christ—central to my (and our) existence? Yes. Do I care about sexual immorality? Yes. Do I care about social justice and peace? Yes. Do I care about witnessing verbally to the gospel of Jesus Christ, potentially making disciples of Christ? Yes. Do I care about loving Muslims, even in costly ways? Yes. Do I believe the Christian faith is about an individual relationship with God in Christ? Yes. Do I believe in allowing others the freedom to disagree with and live differently from me (and us)? Yes. Do I believe I am to be willing to lay down my life for my non-Christian neighbor (and enemy)? Yes.

Discernment in the Spirit is a serious process that seeks the truth and speaks the truth in love. Simply agreeing to disagree in love is not enough.

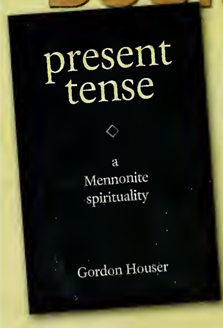
Once we begin to spell out such implications of a holistic understanding of the gospel, it is difficult to align ourselves easily with right or left. It simply doesn't work. Our fundamental identity is in Christ, not in political parties or any other allegiance than Christ.

Once we are clear that truth and our own humility matter, we don't see all interpretations of Scripture as necessarily valid or inspired by the Holy Spirit. Some—including potentially our own—may simply be wrong, perhaps even rooted in sinfulness. So, discernment in the Spirit is a serious process that seeks the truth and speaks the truth in love. Simply agreeing to disagree in love is not enough.

Nothing I have said is intended to imply that this is easy. This costly, challenging, sometimes painful and often fruitful journey reminds us that we follow in the way of Jesus as embodied in the Gospels, in the lives of the apostles, in the lives of the courageous disciples whose stories we read from the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's opening words of the first chapter of his book *The Cost of Discipleship* may be pertinent at such a time as this: "Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of our church. Our struggle today is for costly grace." I also continue to hope that other early words in his book may be true for us: "In times of church renewal, holy Scripture naturally becomes richer in content for us." And, if so, we might say with him: "Discipleship is joy."—*Mark Thiessen Nation, professor of theology, teaching theology, Christian ethics and Anabaptist studies at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va. See his blog Anabaptist Nation.*

Books from the editors



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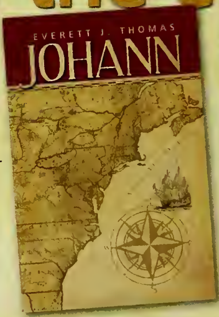
—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners



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—*John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

Johann was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
—*Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

CALENDAR

Ridgeview Mennonite Church, Gordonville, Pa., will celebrate its ***50th anniversary*** on June 10. Visit www.ridgeviewmennonite.net for more details.

WORKERS

Martin, Benjamin D., was licensed as lead pastor for Green Terrace Mennonite Church, Wernersville, Pa., on March 11.

Martin, Darren P., was licensed as a member of the pastoral team at Blainsport Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on March 4.

Martin, Neal E., was licensed as pastor of youth ministry at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on March 28.

Metzler, J. Michael, was ordained as youth pastor for Mountville Mennonite Church, Mountville, Pa., on March 18.

Smith, Baron K., was ordained as lead pastor for Latter Rain House of Restoration, Claymont, Dele., on March 18.

Wise, David L., was licensed as a member of the pastoral team at Blainsport Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on March 4.

OBITUARIES

Bauman, Ruth B., 88, Goshen, Ind., died March 23. Parents: Norman, Sr., and Ella Shoup Bauman. Memorial service: March 31 at Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Bertsche, Paul E., 83, Flanagan, Ill., died Feb. 7. Spouse: June Miller Bertsche. Parents: Arthur John and Emma Eymann Bertsche. Children: Steve, Dale, Larry, Janice Young, Julie May; 16 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 10 at Prairieview Mennonite Church, Flanagan.

Cordell, Glenn A., 92, Chambersburg, Pa., died March 26. Spouse: Mary Appleby Cordell. Parents: Herbert and Mazie Clever Cordell. Children: Glenn R., Leonard A.; six grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 31 at Marion Mennonite Church, Chambersburg.

Crossgrove, Mary L., 88, Leo, Ind., died March 20, of cancer. Spouse: Orvil J. Crossgrove (deceased). Children: Judy Schwartz, Betty Graber, Larry, Gary, David; 10 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; three great-great grandchildren. Funeral: March 24 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo.

Derstine, Edna N. Freed, 89, Telford, Pa., died March 8. Spouse: Stayton B. Derstine (deceased). Parents: John G. and Anne Freed. Child: Nancy McCahan; two grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Eichelberger, Calvin John, 85, Wayland, Iowa, March 1. Spouse: Anna Driver Eichelberger. Spouse: Betty Johnston Eichelberger (deceased). Parents: William and Katie Graber Eichelberger. Children: Dave, Don, Bruce, Joe, Jan Hochstetler; 12 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 6 at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Gehman, Carol R., 66, Strasburg, Pa., died Feb. 20, of cancer. Parents: Aaron Weber Gehman and Florence I. Baker Gehman. Funeral: Feb. 23 at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

Graber, James E., 69, Stryker, Ohio, died Feb. 24. Spouse: Gloria Grey Graber. Parents: Clarence and Wilma Yoder Graber. Children: Shane, Christopher, Shauna Rasor; three grandchildren. Funeral: March 1 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker.

Hamsher, Kathryn M. Lehman, 94, Orrville, Ohio, died March 19, following a brief illness. Spouse: Dallas Hamsher (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Sarah Moser Lehman. Children: Kathleen Hess, Keith; five grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 24 at Orrville Mennonite Church.

Harder, Bessie Mae Zimmerly, 86, Mountain Lake, Minn., died March 25, of cancer. Spouse: Jacob A. Dick. Spouse: Albert M. Harder (deceased). Parents: Edwin P. and Mary Bixler Zimmerly. Children: Rebecca Aum, Rachel Diener, David, Maryann Harder, Wilma Harder; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Step-children: Mary Harder, Norman Dick, Marlin, Erin; eight step-grandchildren. Funeral: March 31 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Hershberger, Delwyn "Del" Lynn, 54, Kalona, Iowa, died March 14. Spouse: Jane Yoder Hershberger. Parents: John D. and Alma Miller Hershberger. Children: Nicole Hershberger, Michael. Funeral: March 19 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Hess, James Robert, 85, Lancaster, Pa., died Dec. 20, 2011. Spouse: Beatrice Hershberger Hess. Parents: Oliver and Verna Forry Hess. Children: J. Richard, Liz, Daniel, Gerald; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 28 at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Krehbiel, Evelyn L. Nunemaker, 86, Bluffton, Ohio, died Feb. 22, at St. Rita's Medical Center, Lima, Ohio. She was born Sep. 17, 1925, in Danvers, Ill., to Harvey and Alma Ruth Ebersole Nunemaker. On Aug. 30, 1947, she married Howard E. Krehbiel and he preceded her in death on March 30, 1999. The daughter of a Mennonite minister, Evelyn attended school in Comins, Mich., and Tiskilwa, Ill., and graduated from high school in Donnellson, Iowa, in 1943. While in Donnellson, she met Howard. She worked for a time at the Schaeffer Pen Company in Ft. Madison, Iowa, before attending Bluffton College and graduating in 1948. Howard and Evelyn lived for a time in Chicago, and Zion, Ill., before moving to Niles, Mich., where their first child was born. Later they moved to Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, and then Austin, Texas, before returning to Bluffton in 1970. They designed and built their home there in 1972. Evelyn loved writing and was editor of the Central District Reporter, a publication of the Mennonite Church Central District, for 17 years. She and Howard also worked for many years in the Bluffton College Archives which Evelyn enjoyed because of her interest in genealogy. Evelyn enjoyed writing poetry, and was a member of a local writers' group. She was active in her church activities at First Mennonite in Bluffton, and loved beautiful things: art, music, and nature. She spent many enjoyable hours breeding daylilies, and shared many plants with others. Evelyn had many warm relationships with family and friends, and will be dearly missed. Survivors include two daughters, Annette Hilty of Bluffton, Connie (Bill) Nunemaker of Shevlin, Minn., two sons, Jon (Beth) Krehbiel of Nashville, Tenn., Steve (Galen) Krehbiel of Vancouver, British Columbia, 15 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and sister Mary Ann (Clarence) Kooker of Bluffton. Funeral services were held March 3 at the First Mennonite Church, Bluffton. Rev. Louise Wideman officiating, with burial in Maple Grove Cemetery, Bluffton.

Layman, Evelyn Carr, 100, Harrisonburg, Va., died March 12. Spouse: Carl A. Layman (deceased). Parents: Solomon and Peachie Montoney Carr. Child: C. Sheldon; two grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Lehman, Marion A., 97, Goshen, Ind., died March 16. Spouse: Frances E. Schnell Lehman (deceased). Parents: Jacob P. and Sarah Moser Lehman. Children: Kermit, Rex, Eric; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Leichty, Clarence Nicholas, 89, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 25, of discitis. Spouse: Wilma Evelyn Ewert Leichty. Parents: Nicholas and Magdalena Maurer Leichty. Children: Paul, Bruce, Cheryl Blaum; five grandchildren. Funeral: March 4 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Dorothea Elizabeth Messick, 92, Sarasota, Fla., died March 13. Spouse: W. Ray Miller. Parents: Harry and Lillian Messick. Children: Gail, Cheryl Eash, Barbara Miller; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Bayshore Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Miller, Edna Mae Wittmer, 86, Hartville, Ohio, died Feb. 20. Spouse: Mahlon Miller. Parents: Henry and Elizabeth Wittmer. Children: Dorothy Schrock, Eugene, Elton, Gaylord, Sheryl Weaver, Myron; 17 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.

Miller, Marie Peters, 90, Elkhart, Ind., died March 15. Spouse: Vic Miller. Parents: Dietrich and Helena Friesen Peters. Children: Carol Miller Histand, Vici Vogel, Terry; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 23 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Miller, Mary Catherine Stanton, 77, Springs, Pa., died March 17, of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Blaine Edward Miller. Parents: Melvin and Mabel Bittinger Stanton. Child: Mitchell James Miller. Funeral: March 24 at Newman's Funeral Home, Grantsville, Md.

Morningstar, Dorothy Klopfenstein, 89, Goshen, Ind., died March 4. Spouse: Ora Morningstar (deceased). Parents: James and Mabel Eicher Klopfenstein. Children: Jennie Kaufman, Allen, Timothy; eight grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 9 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Nafziger, Doris Holaway, 82, Archbold, Ohio, died March 10 of cancer. Spouse: Glen Nafziger. Parents: Clarence Jesse and Ella Mullett Holaway. Children: Greg, Mark, Maribeth Nyce, Sue Paden, Laura Hoag, Matthew; 17 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 13 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Reeser, Ruth Bixler, 80, Albany, Ore., died March 11. Spouse: Clarence Reeser. Parents: A. Dale and Celesta Smucker Bixler. Children: Regina Bumstead, W. Dale, Gerald Lee, Emily Jo Riesser, Gregory Allen; 13 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 18 at Albany Mennonite Church.

Reimer, Clara Franz, 84, North Newton, Kan., died Feb. 19, of a stroke. Spouse: Walter Reimer. Parents: Julius and Agatha Dyck Franz. Children: Greg, Roger; four grandchildren. Funeral: March 10 at Menno Mennonite Church, Ritzville, Wash.

Schmell, Jean N. Moyer, 89, Souderton, Pa., died March 3. Spouse: Wilmer Landis Schmell (deceased). Parents: William Anglemoyer Moyer and Blanche Nase Moyer. Children: Judith, Mary Jane, Michael Han; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 3 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Schmucker, Cleo D., 83, Louisville, Ohio, died Feb. 28. Spouse: Eunice Mellinger Schmucker. Children: Cathy Taylor, Marla Schmucker; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 24 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Schrock, Mary Cross, 83, Elkhart, Ind., died March 7. Spouse: Jonas D. Schrock (deceased). Parents: Enos and Mattie Cross Yoder. Children: Maxine J. Kurt, Virginia J. Forgey, Kerm G., Ken G., Karl G.; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 15 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Shank, Odela Elizabeth Sutter, 89, Dixon, Ill., and Goshen, Ind., died March 21. Spouse: Raymond L. Shank (deceased). Parents: Lawrence and Sarah Birkey Sutter. Children: Lorraine Borntrager, Wanda Bouwman, Galen, Leon, Marlin. Funeral: March 24 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling, Ill.

Short, James E., 61, Goshen, Ind., died March 4. Spouse: Mary Jo Hartzler Short. Parents: Elden and Erma Holsopple Short. Children: Kelly Muhonen, Bran, Elisabeth. Funeral: March 11 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Stalter, Milo Dean, 97, Goshen, Ind., died March 23. Spouse: Lois Wingard Stalter (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Alice Miller Stalter. Children: Sandra Gingerich, Linda Butti, Carl; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 27 at The Meetinghouse at Greencroft Healthcare, Goshen.

Stauffer, Grace Metzler, 97, Lititz, Pa., died March 22. Spouse: Elam W. Stauffer (deceased). Parents: Harvey and Katie Metzler. Children: Philip, Kenneth, Bruce; three grandchildren. Funeral: March 31 at West Bethany Chapel at Landis Homes, Lititz.

Stucky, Bernice Albrecht, 84, Marion, S.D., died Feb. 29. Spouse: Weldon Stucky (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Adina Kaufman Albrecht. Children: Jerry, Julie Moen, Kay Shunk, Jodi Baumgarn, Brian; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 5 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Waltner, Ken Darwood, 59, Freeman, S.D., died Feb. 17 of brain cancer. Spouse: Cindy Wollman Waltner. Parents: Gene and Joyce Kaufman Waltner. Children: Brett, Jenna; one grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 21 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Weaver, Ruth Louise Hartman, 88, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 2. Spouse: Elwood D. Weaver. Parents: Lewis Samuel and Grace LaRue Good Hartman. Children: Jerry, Kenny, Diane Yoder, Susan Eshleman; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 7 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Yoder, Fay Marie Wenger, 93, Wakarusa, Ind., died Feb. 20. Spouse: Merrill J. Yoder. Parents: Charles and Goldie Weldy Wenger. Children: Louise Leach, Roger, Dennis, James, Faye Hackman; 15 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Yoder, Theodore "Theo" Brian, 22, Kalona, Iowa, died April 12 following an intermittent twelve-year battle with various cancers. Parents: Brian and Lynn Miller Yoder. Siblings: Josh, Rex. Funeral: April 16 at Iowa Mennonite School Celebration Hall, Kalona.

Yost, Lyle Edgar, 99, Hesston, Kan., died April 5. Spouse: Erma M. Martin Yost. Parents: Joseph and Edith Alma Hensley Yost. Children: Byron, Winston, Susan Yost, Cameron, Necia Ann Yost; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 11 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

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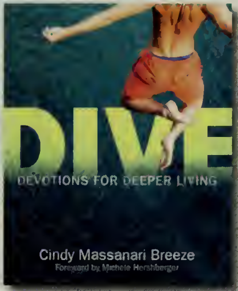

Dive
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RESOURCES

Spirituality and the Awakening Self: The Sacred Journey of Transformation by David G. Benner (Brazos Press, 2012, $19.99) offers a deeper understanding of the self and its spiritual development. Drawing on a broad range of Christian traditions, Benner shows that the transformation of self is foundational to Christian spirituality.

Jesus and Paul Before Christianity: Their World and Work in Retrospect by V. George Shillington (Cascade Books, 2011, $27) seeks to locate Jesus and Paul in their respective places in the first century, in Jewish contexts and within the larger Greco-Roman society and hear more clearly their prophetic voices in their social locations.

Journey to the Heart: Christian Contemplation Through the Centuries, edited by Kim Nataraja (Orbis Books, 2012, $35), explores the long tradition of Christian spirituality from New Testament times to today. Written by leading spiritual writers, the book is illustrated throughout and covers 30 figures, from Jesus to John Main.

Gandhi and the Unspeakable: His Final Experiment with Truth by James W. Douglass (Orbis Books, 2012, $24) shows how those who conspired to kill Gandhi hoped to destroy a compelling vision of peace, nonviolence and reconciliation. Douglass shows how Gandhi had early on confronted and overcome the fear of death and why his story matters today.

Mothers, Sisters, Daughters: Standing on Their Shoulders by Edwina Gateley and Sandra Mattucci (Orbis Books, 2012, $20) presents stories and poetic reflections on 22 women who have made the world a better place by pursuing their dreams and visions—often against enormous odds. Among them are the Woman at the Well, Hildegard of Bingen, Emily Dickinson, Rachel Carson, Dorothy Stang, Rachel, Corrie, Aung San Suu Kyi and Wangari Muta Maathai.

Our God Is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice by Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell (Orbis Books, 2012, $24) shows how the perspective of the immigrant offers fresh eyes for reading the Bible, which in turn offers a new way of seeing the plight of the stranger and sojourner among us.

The Twice-Paid Farm: A Memoir of Grandma Rhoda by Twila Schrock (2011, $24.95) tells the story of Rhoda Yoder, a Mennonite pioneer on the prairie. In 1907, after her husband died, she raised four children and managed a 160-acre farm. Order from Twila Schrock, 13 Lakewood Circle, North Newton, KS 67117.

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"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock."—Matthew 7:24

Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., is looking for a ***pastor of community life***, .75 to 1 FTE, and a ***pastor of senior ministries***, .5 FTE. Waterford is an active participant in Mennonite Church USA and Indiana-Michigan Conference. See our website, www.waterfordchurch.org, for job descriptions and contact information.

Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., seeks ***two resident directors*** to begin Summer 2012. Review of applications begins immediately and will continue until position is filled. For more information see http://www.bethelks.edu/bc/careers/openings.php. Please send a cover letter, resume, three letters of reference and an employment application to Weldon Martens, Interim VP for Student Life, at wmartens@bethelks.edu or Bethel College, 300 E. 27th Street, North Newton, KS 67117. AA/EOE

Lezha Academic Center in Lezhe, Albania, seeks ***mathematics, science, and ESL teachers***, beginning August 2012. Employment through partnership with Virginia Mennonite Missions. First-year, experienced and retired educators encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Contact Rita Steiner: rddsteiner@gmail.com or 540-421-7166.

Notice: I will be conducting archival research at the University of Saratov, Russia, during June 2012. My research will focus on the Am Trakt Mennonite settlements, particularly Lindenau, where my Nickel ancestors emigrated in 1857. I am interested in communicating with anyone with interest in the Am Trakt settlements. Please contact me at 807-476-7335 or walter.epp@lakeheadu.ca.

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EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
LANDS of the BIBLE: JORDAN and ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR TYLER HARTFORD (July 19-28)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 23-September 3)
TOUR to LITHUANIA (in partnership with LCC International University) (September 12-19)
MENNONITE STORY in POLAND and UKRAINE (September 18-29)
SCENIC AUTUMN CRUISE: CANADA and NEW ENGLAND (October 6-16)
MEDA TOUR to ETHIOPIA and TANZANIA (October12-24)
SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (October 13-22)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)
MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS

JAMAICA - Its PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 11-20)
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
MEDA in MOROCCO (April 2-12)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25)
MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN and CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28-May 7)
EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15)
GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 24-June 6)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 6-19)
ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
RUSSIA & UKRAINE (September 9-21)
THE BRITISH ISLES (England, Scotland and Wales) with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (October 17-28)
CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (November 1-15)
EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (December 9-15)

2014 TOURS

THE AMAZON RAIN FOREST and GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (January 16-26)
SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA and its FJORDS (June 13-26)

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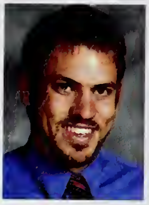
ONLINE

How to respond to Kony 2012



Peter Epp teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba.

Like my students and I, you probably stumbled across a viral video entitled "Kony 2012" in the past month or two. Even if you didn't, I'm willing to wager you've heard the name.

In case you're in the latter group, here's a recap: Kony 2012 is the name of a video—as well as the movement inspired by that video—produced by the nonprofit organization Invisible Children that invites you to:

1. Care about the atrocities committed by Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), against children in eastern Africa, and
2. Make Joseph Kony famous by plastering the world with "Kony 2012" posters, writing politicians and appealing to celebrities, so that
3. The United States will continue to give military support to the Ugandan army to hunt Joseph Kony down.

If you noticed the massive success of this video, you likely noticed the resulting backlash—countless editorials criticizing Invisible Children's oversimplification of the issues, naïve solutions and financial integrity. You probably also heard something about the presumed impact of this criticism on Jason Russell, the director/narrator of the Kony 2012 video and one of the founders of Invisible Children, when he was detained by police and diagnosed with a temporary psychotic breakdown. One moment, it felt like the world couldn't wait to kill Joseph Kony. The next moment, everyone seemed ready to dispense with Jason Russell instead.

We need a Christlike approach to an issue this big.

Where do we fit in? It seems worthwhile to note that Kony 2012 left many of our North American Mennonite communities without the choice to opt out. When a movement gets this big, even a nonresponse becomes a response. The tragedies reflected in Kony 2012 are precisely the kind of thing Christ calls us to care about. We shouldn't respond just because a viral documentary tells us to, but we also shouldn't ignore injustice for that reason either.

Kony 2012 is a reminder that we live in a world of fast, passionate and polarizing information. It also may be a chance for us to examine how to live in a time that produces dialogues like it—dialogues we didn't start or even ask to be a part of but that we are a part of simply because we exist.

Then how do we respond? When my students and colleagues watched the video, we felt some combination of inspiration and concern. We wondered about the faithfulness of labeling Joseph Kony an enemy. We wondered if there was something colonial about Invisible Children's approach. And we definitely wondered about the faithfulness and wisdom of appealing to the United States to further use its military to help the Ugandan military hunt Kony down. When the public started to turn on Invisible Children and Jason Russell, it seemed like a welcome opportunity to just forget about it.

Still, so many of us also felt inspired, and the tragedies are real. So what does that mean?

In the end, my students concluded that we're not called to buy completely into the Kony 2012 movement, but we're not off the hook either. To paint Joseph Kony as disposable evil and to support a militaristic manhunt is to buy into the myth of redemptive violence. Yet to see Invisible Children's breakdown as evidence that they're worthless is to buy into a subtler but still-prevalent violence as well. Jason Russell seems to be yet another casualty of media and society that want us to find villains and applaud their downfall. Just as it was right of us to question Russell, it's also right to question the way society has abandoned the good in what he called us to.

When an issue in our culture gets this big, we need to care and show that we care, and we need a Christlike approach. Thankfully, Christ's teachings against violence allowed us to ask the right questions when the video came out and to stay committed to its potential good when the filmmaker's popularity declined.

What does this mean? For us it's meant this: We've decided to raise funds for Concerned Parents Association (www.cpa-uganda.org), a nonprofit started and run by Ugandans who are affected by the LRA's abductions and who are dedicated to addressing these atrocities nonviolently and holistically. Do we worry that this may be naïve, oversimplified or colonial in its own way? Absolutely. But we also trust that our faith community will continue to discern with us either way. TM

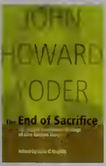
FILM REVIEW

Pina (PG) is a tribute to the late German choreographer Pina Bausch, as her dancers perform her most famous creations. We are so used to verbal art forms that seeing a film consisting mostly of dancing is stunning. Shot in 3-D, Wim Wenders' film joins film and dance in a mesmerizing whole. We see parts of Bausch's creations in various settings and hear from some of the dancers.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

GO TO
CHURCH
CHANGE
THE WORLD
Gerald J. Mast

Go to Church, Change the World: Christian Community as Calling by Gerald J. Mast (Herald Press, 2012, $13.99) argues that "the most important decision for a person who seeks to follow Christ is not which occupation to choose but whether to accept the gifts of suffering and blindness that are part of the call to be the church." Using contemporary stories and those from Anabaptist martyrs as well as referencing other books, Mast shows the importance of spiritual practices such as Bible study, baptism, Communion, service, yieldedness, sacrifice, praise and witness. —*gh*



The End of Sacrifice: The Capital Punishment Writings of John Howard Yoder, edited by John C. Nugent (Herald Press, 2011, $16.99), collects articles by the Mennonite theologian that argue that "both biblically and culturally, from ancient society until today, capital punishment is an inherently cultic or ritual practice." Yoder's core thesis, writes editor Nugent, is that "since the death of Jesus brought a decisive end to sacrifices for sin, Christians should proclaim its abolition, and death penalty advocates should no longer claim biblical validation." This volume makes available to readers helpful writings on this important subject.—*gh*

Hungry for a saner world

On occasion a book and/or film catches the imagination of a large audience. This can provide insight into our society but also nudge people to think in new ways.

Now a popular film, *The Hunger Games* is based on the best-selling young adult novel by Suzanne Collins. It's the first of a trilogy that includes *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*.

For any who aren't familiar with *The Hunger Games* phenomenon, the first book came out in 2008. Collins says she got the idea when channel surfing and flipped between a reality show and footage of the Iraq War. The book is narrated by Katniss Everdeen, a 16-year-old girl who lives in a post-apocalyptic world in the country of Panem, where North America is now. The country is ruled from a metropolis called the Capitol. Every year a boy and a girl aged 12-18 is chosen by lottery from each of 12 districts to take part in the Hunger Games, a televised competition in which the lone survivor of the 24 contestants wins.

Katniss, who is skilled as a hunter, takes her younger sister's place in the competition. She represents the moral voice of the novel. But the situation is so insane it's hard to imagine remaining moral at all.

The book is written as an engaging story, but it implies other messages, including a critique of violent entertainment. The tricky thing about that is its use of violent entertainment to speak against violent entertainment.

Collins largely succeeds. Marty Troyer, pastor of Houston Mennonite Church, has written a thoughtful analysis of Collins' critique of violence (http://blog.chron.com/thepeacepastor/2012/03/hunger-games-indicting-violence/).

As he points out, she is good at helping readers feel the effects of violence. It never seems gratuitous. And you can't help wondering, What would I do in such an insane situation?

We in this country are largely protected from such lethal situations, though soldiers and many in poor, crime-ridden areas face such dangers every day. For them, it's not a fictional fantasy but all too real.

The movie version is weaker because it cannot include the inner turmoil of Katniss and she seeks a moral path through this insanity. It also softens the violence of the book, mostly, I imagine, to achieve a PG-13 rating. While faithful to the book's story and well-acted, the film lacks the emotional core of the book. It never matches the suspense the book creates. We watch Katniss deal with this ordeal, but we don't feel her struggle in much depth.

Nevertheless, *The Hunger Games* should help us think about the violence we've come to accept and the violent entertainment we consume so readily. I hope it makes us hungrier for a saner world where peace is sought.

Another film this spring presents a different take on young people's struggles with violence. *Bully*, which I haven't seen, is a documentary that follows five kids and families over the course of a school year. The film confronts bullying's most tragic outcomes, including the stories of two families who've lost children to suicide and a mother who waits to learn the fate of her 14-year-old daughter, incarcerated after bringing a gun on her school bus.

The film received an R rating for language. The Weinstein Co. protested this rating, which will prevent many of its intended audience from seeing it. Director Lee Hirsch said he declined to edit the documentary's offensive language because it would diminish the painful reality of bullying.

Bully depicts not a future fantasy but a current reality.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

system to give us a choice that is law-abiding and thus meets the minimum threshold of Romans 13.

During the past seven years, Republican and Democrat distinctives have been eclipsed by the unity of the two major parties in their disregard for the rule of law. Examples include the refusal to prosecute Wall Street banksters who stole billions of dollars, the flagrant violation of constitutional protections related to privacy in our communications, the persecution of whistle-blowers and the violent taking of American lives based solely on secret accusations of government officials.

In foreign affairs, the two major parties again stand together in claiming America's right to roam the earth and do as it pleases. It matters little which political party controls the White House; both pursue war and send killing squads into other countries without Congress casting a vote. Nations that refuse to fall in line, such as Iraq, Libya, Syria or Iran, are stigmatized relentlessly by deceitful propaganda and are eventually crushed or dismembered.

Not only do followers of Jesus have no stake in the make-believe wrestling matches these two parties stage every four years, we have an obligation to call it what it is: a charade designed to divert our attention from the horrors offstage. We are becoming a lawless nation. Until that is named, the posturing and showboating at center stage will not change our national direction, no matter how authentically the lead characters play their roles.

What the U.S. political structure asks us to give every four years is the very thing it is forfeiting by its disdain for the rule of law: legitimacy. If we are faithful to our calling, we will refuse to give it. And we will find a way to explain ourselves out loud, in the public square.—*Berry Friesen, Lancaster, Pa.*

Correction: In "Six Women Honored by RAW" (April), Keyla Cortez Vanegas was listed as an Honduran. She is from Nicaragua.

Thanks for Easter story

I am grateful for your selections of interesting and informational articles. Special thanks to Isaac Villegas for his Easter story and the sharing of his meaningful footwashing service ("A Holy Hybridity," April).

Regarding the disclaimer on the Opinion page: The placement of the disclaimer box is important. For me, it tends to give a negative note to the article on the page where it is found. For instance, I found Serena Townsend's article very pertinent (April). But with the disclaimer note on that page, it seemed to question her preoccupation. —*Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

A prayer for justice

On behalf of the communities in this nation as well as the people, places and situations associated with the death of Trayvon Martin and others killed by human-to-human violence across this nation, Lord God, our Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus, we ask for all that's needed and thank you for all that will be done:

- For prevention of executions and disruptions of death-dealing, body-maiming plans, operations, inciting verbalizations and activities of carnally, demonically and satanically influenced, power-hungry, misguided, mentally ill, psychotic, fearful, greedy, racist or revenge-driven people and groups, including nations, gangs, ethnic or religious groups, political parties, police officers, criminal organizations and militias within this nation.
- For the binding of satanic and demonic forces—wicked principalities and powers, as well as restraint of human beings and human systems influenced by such forces, carnality, selfishness or other un-Christlike attitudes, philosophies and theologies, especially as they would work to repeal, disregard, negate, obstruct, nullify, undo or circumvent laws and policies that reflect your loving-kindness, justice, wisdom, righteousness and will and/or as they would work to prevent or delay passage of legislation that's needed at this time.
- For the expeditious development and enactment of laws and policies that reflect your loving-kindness, justice, wisdom, righteousness and will that are needed in your sight.
- For the equitable, just and merciful enforcement of such laws and policies that are already in place.—*Elaine Bryant, Chicago*

Call no one 'good'

I was happy to see the shining faces of my uncle, Arthur Roth, and his lovely wife, Marjorie, on your cover (February). It's beautiful celebrating his record of service pastoring the Julesburg (Colo.) Mennonite Church for over 50 years. However, I was surprised to see that, despite Jesus' admonition not to call any man "good," you renamed Art Roth "Art Good" in the "In This Issue" box.

I've always thought Art was good, even with a capital G. I don't know that he'd agree. I suppose Arthur would call himself a sinner saved by grace. I've always been impressed with his activity—emergency work, carrying the Olympic torch, the way the Presbyterians claimed him for their own. But mostly, I enjoy his humble spirit, his love for God, his kind nature, wisdom, humor, the echo of his native Canada in his voice, and that twinkle in his eyes.

When I went to their church website (www.mennochurch.weebly.com) to listen to a sermon, I saw that Arthur and Marjorie are listed as janitors, in the same month their picture graced your cover.

I pray their health will be strong and will allow them to serve many more years. I invite you to join me in that prayer. I hope one day, far in the future, Art will hear his Savior call him a "good and faithful servant." Until then, the Roth name remains quite fine, and we should say, "Thou 'Art Good' " to God alone, and not dear pastor Art Roth.—*Brenda Miller, Orrville, Ohio*

Signposts: A missional community

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.—Romans 12:4-5 (TNIV)

There are few things that draw a church community together like a common sense of mission or purpose. Some churches have a written mission statement, others just carry their calling in their bones. You can feel it in every aspect of the congregation.

God has gifted every believer with gifts to be used on behalf of the church's mission. In response, a church with a clear missional calling has vital work for every member to do.

Unfortunately, many "Gifts Discernment" committees simply seek to fill "slots" in the congregational structure. They begin with a list of roles in congregational life and breathe a sigh of relief when they find enough people with the gifts to fill them.

In a truly missional community, it works the other way around. The church begins by looking at people's gifts and then pointing them toward roles and tasks that exercise those gifts.

Some churches go to great lengths to help members identify not only their gifts and strengths but their particular passion for ministry. Many gifts of members are put to their best use in the outward mission of the church, ministering to people who are not yet connected with the congregation. The church does well to highlight this kind of ministry.

The apostle Paul shows that gifts of ministry are given to each individually in order to benefit the whole body of Christ. Here is where Christians make a radical departure from our worldly surroundings. We do not use our gifts for self-aggrandizement or to further our position. Rather, we use our gifts to build up the body of Christ. This is what is implied by the following trait of a missional church:

Missional character trait: The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all its members.

Signpost: The church has made its "mission" its priority and in overt and communal ways is seeking to be and do "what God is calling us to know, be and do."

The Salvation Army (originally named Christian Mission) is a good example of this trait. Ministering to nonmembers has been an essential part of their calling since the church was founded as a denomination in 1865. Their ministry of mercy is so obvious to the watching world that one can hardly miss it, especially at Christmas time. It's far more than a social service; it's a spiritual calling. To emphasize the missional duty of the church, every member is called a soldier. Where I live, the Salvation Army congregation is growing rapidly because their community takes seriously their task to reach people for Jesus who are not yet associated with any church.

I have reservations about being called a soldier for Jesus, even though Paul uses the metaphor in 2 Timothy 2:3-4. But I heartily commend the Salvation Army for making their missional calling a top priority. As Mennonite Church USA, we dare not settle for anything less. TM

We do not use our gifts for self-aggrandizement, or to further our position. Rather, we use our gifts to build up the body of Christ.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Lessons from a tragedy

Everett J. Thomas

The still-unresolved case of George Zimmerman shooting Trayvon Martin has laid bare some harsh realities for us all. As Mennonite Church USA continues to work at dismantling racism within our circles, we need to talk about how those realities also exist in our minds and hearts.

The first reality: African-Americans hear a starkly different narrative than do white people. A national poll released on April 5 substantiated this disparity. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*/TIPP poll, twice as many blacks and Hispanics as whites say race played a major role in the shooting death of Trayvon (73 percent to 36 percent).

Blacks also understand the responses to the shooting differently from whites, according to a similar poll done by *USA Today*/Gallup. Gallup editor in chief Frank Newport concluded that blacks believe Zimmerman would have immediately been arrested and charged had the victim been white, not black.

Iris de León Hartshorn, the Executive Board's director for transformative peacemaking, asked why the Mennonite Church USA made no statement about the situation and explained that African-American members in our church are waiting to see whether we would stand in solidarity with them and the narrative they hear.

African-American members of our denomination are experiencing something very different from the majority when looking at the Trayvon Martin shooting.

So, on our Facebook page and website, we asked whether Mennonite Church USA should make a statement of such solidarity. The results from both (unscientific) surveys were the same: By clear margins, respondents did not want such a statement from our church.

A second reality from this tragedy is also a learning for some people: the difference between race and ethnicity.

In his March 25 column, Leonard Pitts Jr. explained that George Zimmerman is both white and Hispanic.

"'Hispanic' is not a race but an ethnicity," Pitts wrote. He then cited the U.S. Census Bureau: "People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish may be any race."

Examples help. Pitts wrote: "People we now regard as white—the Irishman Conan O'Brien; the Armenian Andre Agassi; the Jew Jerry Seinfeld … had to earn their whiteness, a feat African-Americans have found impossible to duplicate."

In other words, people from any ethnic background can become part of the dominant culture only if they look white. For people who do not look white? No white privilege for them.

Within our circles, this difference between race and ethnicity could serve as a significant focal point in establishing intercultural competency.

A final reality confronting us from the Martin shooting is the "stand your ground" laws in too many states. It is here especially that a tradition such as ours can speak to other Christians about nonresistance and peacemaking. But it may be that we, too, have become so attached to "our ground" that we are unwilling to even verbalize a third way.

I do not agree with some who responded to our polls, insisting we should say nothing until all the facts are in.

African-American members of our denomination are experiencing something very different from the majority. It is a measure of our love and commitment to these sisters and brothers that makes it incumbent upon us to speak up and stand in solidarity with them.—*ejt*

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- Why did Jesus say so much about hell?
- Should we update *Martyrs Mirror?*
- Does Facebook make us lonely?
- 200 years later

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TheMennonite June 2012 | Volume 15, Number 6

CONTENTS

12 Holy restlessness leads to home in Christ —Laurie Oswald Robinson

16 Bearing witness to our missional God —Ron Adams

19 A day care in Bolivia —Isaac Shue

21 Three ways to God —Everett J. Thomas

24 Why did Jesus say so much about hell? —Martin Lehman

27 Body double —Jonathan P. Larson

28 Losing our wattage —Gloria J. Wallace

32 Now 'Anabaptist' instead of 'Associated'—Mary E. Klassen

34 Church responds to hunger for conversations —Cindy Snider

36 Retirement communities to feel more like home —Serena Townsend

38 Mennonite schools hold commencements

42 Resolutions to confront differences in WDC —Gordon Houser

43 Allegheny Conference leaders suggest reconciliation—Everett J. Thomas

44 200 years since the War of 1812—John Longhurst

ON THE COVER: Photo provided

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
47 For the Record
50 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

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June 2012 | Volume 15, Number 6

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The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
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STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1819
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Clarifications from Tillie's sister

Tillie Yoder Nauraine (May) was my oldest sister. I agree that she was a person of "courage and persistence" in her vision and development of what became Camp Ebenezer.

However, the opening background in the article deserves some clarification. Tillie grew up near Kokomo, Ind., until she was 21. At that time she left home and moved to Harrisonburg, Va., where she later joined the Mennonite church. Except for four summers that Camp Ebenezer was open, she spent little time in Ohio.

It is true that discipline in our home was harsh and even abusive at times. To suggest that her abuse was "perhaps one of the reasons she took compassion on young children" is speculation. Tillie had four younger siblings and assisted in their care at a very young age. In many ways she was my surrogate mother. In addition, our parents were friends with various African Americans in Kokomo as we were growing up. Our mom and dad were open and accepting of anyone who crossed our threshold.

During the years Tillie spent in the Harrisonburg area, she worked to support herself, took Bible courses at Eastern Mennonite College and attended a small African-American "mission" church. Peggy Webb's mother was a good friend to Tillie. She wanted Peggy to attend a Mennonite college. Since Peggy could not go to EMC, Tillie agreed to go with Peggy to Hesston (Kan.) College. Tillie also taught summer Bible school with the Larks in Chicago. I think these were the reasons she was interested in a summer camp.—*Ann Showalter, Newton, Kan.*

Reconciliation, not sacrifice

Regarding "Good Friday Worship" (April): I would be happier if Everett Thomas would not couch the wondrous story of our atonement in terms of child sacrifice but rather that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).—*John Asa Hertzler, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Where is authority?

Regarding "Where is Authority in the Church?" (April): Leonard Gross argues that there is no authority in the church above and beyond the local congregation because there is no church except the local congregation. If that is true, it then follows that any attempt by one congregation to impose its understanding of the faith—what is essential, what is not essential—on any other congregation would be strictly unauthorized.

Yet that is precisely what the Jerusalem church did in Acts 15. To quote from the official statement: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials."

While the Jerusalem council extended its authority "no further … than these essentials," the language here assumes that the Jerusalem church, gathered in council with the apostles and elders, did have authority both to decide the "essentials" and to "impose … these essentials" on the congregations in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. This assumed authority, moreover, was corroborated by the selection of representatives, Judas and Silas, from the Jerusalem church to accompany Paul and Barnabas with the letter, for the purpose of verbally communicating the decision of the Jerusalem council to the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.

Both the letter and its carriers represented the ecclesial authority of the Jerusalem church, an authority that was exercised over other congregations by means of its council, consensus and communication.

If that is so, we must draw one or another conclusion: Either the Jerusalem church exceeded its authority, in which case the Jerusalem council is for us a negative precedent, or Gross is incorrect because ecclesial authority—and thus the church—exists above and beyond the local congregation. Which, then, is it?*—Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, Lima, Ohio*

Mission worker raises own support

Regarding: "Ten-year-old Girl Studies Alongside Adults" (April): This is a delightful article about the avid girl at Benin Bible Institute. Good teaching work is being done by Kompaoré, who served diligently under various Mennonite boards for 29 years but found that support stopping in 2011.The article states that Kompaoré ministers "with the support of Commission to Every Nation (CTEN), an interdenominational mission-sending agency."

Anne must raise all her own support by personally asking individuals and congregations to contribute funds through CTEN. Such work is complicated by Kompaoré's long-term absence from her North American church family for these three decades.

It seems we're unwilling to support those we don't know. Those who appreciate Kompaoré's ministry can pray for her and offer financial support through www.cten.org.*—Nancy Brubaker, Kitchener, Ontario*

Don't dismiss second coming

In response to "Now-millennialism" (April): Author Duane Hershberger sees "end-times" speakers as seriously confused regarding Jesus' second coming. Many of us would agree with much of his assessment.

But to write off Jesus' second coming is another matter. Hershberger writes: "He came back millions and billions of times. He came back yesterday, last night and this morning. We probably missed it."

To so lightly and irreverently dismiss the great event of our Lord's second coming is to literally "throw out the baby with the bath." Hershberger further says, "Jesus isn't waiting to return. He is already here."

Yes and no. Yes, he promises, "I am with you always to the end of the age"(Matthew 18:20). He is here now by the gift of the Holy Spirit he promised his disciples (John 14:16). No, the bodily presence of Jesus is not on earth now, but he is in heaven waiting until the Father asks him to return to the earth at the end of the age.

At Jesus' ascension following the resurrection, he went up into the sky through the clouds. The two angels told the disciples, "This same Jesus, who has just been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

Jesus made it clear that he was not merely talking about each person's death. Rather he said, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24: 30-31).

Yes, Jesus is here now by his Holy Spirit, and he promises to return bodily from heaven in clouds of the air at the last day. And with John, we say, "Amen, Come Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). *—Eugene K. Souder, Grottoes, Va.*

IN THIS ISSUE

The late Gene Herr was a restless soul (page 12). As Mary, his wife, says in our cover story, "He was always starting things that others said couldn't be done and putting flesh on the ideas that others didn't dare to dream about."

In this issue we also publish Ron Adams' thoughtful critique of the word "missional" and his suggestion for replacing it (page 16).

"We Mennonites have been using this word for at least the last 10 years," Adams writes. "Yet we always need to explain what we mean whenever we use it. … Something is wrong here."

The news section carries two stories about troubled relationships between congregations and the area conferences to which they belong.

In July, Western District Conference participants will be confronted by resolutions dealing with alignment to *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and the ministerial credentials of a pastor (page 42).

In August, Allegheny Mennonite Conference participants will consider a proposal to begin a new process seeking reconciliation with one of its congregations that has been under discipline since November 2005 (page 43).

A "cheeky" email from a Canadian friend (see page 56) led to a News Analysis of the War of 1812. June 19 marks the 200th anniversary of the start of the war.

"As wars go," John Longhurst writes, "it was pretty small stuff—for the British, it was a sideshow to its larger conflict with France. In total, about 20,000 were killed or wounded, with most casualties the result of disease. Most of the fighting occurred in a small geographic area near the Great Lakes (page 44).

Most of us will also be surprised to learn of a U.S. plan to invade Canada as late as 1939 (page 45).*—Editor*

The Mennonite wins six awards at ACP

CHICAGO—At the Associated Church Press' annual awards ceremony on May 2, *The Mennonite* received top-place awards in two categories: Cindy Massanari Breeze's article "Noticed and Welcomed or Invisible and Lonely?" won the category Most Personally Useful, and James Najarian's "Longed-for Rain" won the Poetry category.

A profile of John Powell by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen received an award of merit in the Biographical Profile category.

Steve Nolt's "News Analysis: 150 years after U.S. Civil War," received an honorable mention in the Professional Resources category, and staff at *The Mennonite* received an honorable mention for Convention Coverage.

A letter to *The Mennonite* also was cited in the Best Disapproving Letter category.—*The Mennonite*

MCC photo by Chad Warfel

MCC responds to food crisis in Sahel

During a visit of Mennonite Central Committee partner Development Office of Evangelical Churches (ODE) in Kwon, Burkina Faso, ODE representative Solomon Sangla, right, examines a drought-affected field. A food crisis is spreading through the semi-arid Sahel, a seven-country ribbon across the southern edge of the Sahara, from Mauritania on the Atlantic to Sudan on the Red Sea. The United Nations says the disaster now threatens 15 million lives and may grow to affect several million more.—*MCC*

Collaboration benefits international students

ELKHART, Ind.—Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) announced a new three-year agreement among all five colleges/universities of Mennonite Church USA that will facilitate the success of undergraduate international students.

Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.), Bluffton (Ohio) University, Goshen (Ind.) College and Hesston (Kan.) College have each signed a memo of understanding with Eastern Mennonite University's (EMU) Intensive English Program in Harrisonburg, Va. Each college/university has agreed to do an initial screening of students who apply to the institution and then recommend IEP to those who could benefit from the one-semester or more English language immersion experience.

Two years ago, IEP director Kathleen Roth approached MEA senior director Elaine Moyer with the idea of making IEP available to the other Mennonite colleges/universities. Moyer was excited about the potential for this type of collaboration and encouraged Roth to pursue the idea.

Over a period of time, Roth met individually with admissions/enrollment/academic staff of the four colleges/universities. "I believe strongly in Mennonite education and the work MEA does to bring educators together. I was grateful for the opportunity to share how IEP could work on their behalf and was pleased by their openness and eagerness to work together," says Roth. —*MEA*

Israeli military destroys Palestinian farm, cistern

AL-KHALIL, Hebron—On May 1 at 7:45 a.m., the Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron received a phone call from Noah al-Rajabi in Bani Naim. Al-Rajabi reported that the army and bulldozers were demolishing his cousin's home and threatening to demolish the family's farm.

Two CPT workers arrived at the main road near the house and saw six military jeeps, three police vehicles, and three intelligence service vehicles at the site. When they asked soldiers why they were demolishing the farm, one said, "Because we are the army."

The farmer told the CPT workers, "Destroying my farm—it's not only destroying my livelihood but also the livelihoods of three other families."

At 8:30 a.m. on May 2, the team received a call from a friend in the Beqa'a Valley to inform the Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron the Israeli military was destroying his cousin's reservoir. Two CPT workers went there and saw two army vehicles, two intelligence service vehicles, and a power shovel digging up the ground on the hill below the friend's house and filling dump trucks with this material.

From a roof, they saw a jackhammer lay waste to two of the concrete walls around the reservoir, built to collect rainwater. Without this water supply the family has no means of irrigating their crops. A journalist informed CPT that a commander of the soldiers had told him that he would be happy when the Beqa'a Valley was a desert.—*CPT*

Mission worker to India often talked with God

GOSHEN, Ind.—Florence Irene Nafziger, who wrote about her life and mission work as a nurse in India in her book *My Walk With God*, died April 9 in Goshen. She was 93.

Nafziger served in India from 1946 to 1984, helping establish a nursing school at Dhamtari Christian Hospital, where she also taught. Afterward, she became an administrator and professor at the Graduate School for Nurses in Indore, India.

She was a graduate of Hesston (Kan.) College, Goshen College and the nursing program in La Junta, Colo. In 1984, she moved to Goshen to retire, and in 2000, Goshen College recognized Nafziger for her outstanding medical work in India.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

MDS photo

Disaster aid in Alabama

Mennonite Disaster Service volunteer Ken Loewen puts siding on a house in Cordova, Ala. MDS volunteers came to dig in and help residents rebuild homes wrecked by two tornados, 12 hours apart, on April 27, 2011.—*MDS*

Mennonite Aid Plan celebrates 90 years

REEDLEY, Calif.—Mennonite Aid Plan/Mennonite Insurance Services (MAP/MIS), located in Reedley, celebrated the company's 90th anniversary with an open house on May 11.

MAP/MIS is a mutual insurance company that offers home, auto and liability insurance to Mennonite and other Anabaptist churches and individuals in California, Oregon, Washington and Arizona.

Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren farmers and business people who migrated to the Reedley area in the early 1900s brought with them a centuries-old tradition of mutual aid.

Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren on the West Coast established MAP to help each other when fire or other disasters destroyed homes or other property.—*Kathy Heinrichs Wiest*

MennoMedia wins national media awards

PHILADELPHIA—MennoMedia won two national media awards from a U.S. association during its annual convention April 12. The Religion Communicators Council recognized the *Waging Peace* documentary and the *Shaping Families* radio program.

Waging Peace: Muslim and Christian Alternatives, which won an "award of excellence," is a one-hour documentary about overcoming mistrust, hatred, and violence. It first aired last fall on 130 ABC stations in the United States. Then MennoMedia made it available for purchase as a DVD.

Another winner for MennoMedia was an episode of *Shaping Families*, a weekly 15-minute radio program that started two years ago. It is broadcast on 18 stations. The episode that earned a "certificate of merit" was "Re-entry After Prison," featuring an ex-offender. It aired June 4, 2011. —*MennoMedia*

Everence begins new retirement services

GOSHEN, Ind.—As many organizations get ready to abide by new legal requirements in their employee retirement plans, Everence is introducing Everence Retirement Services (ERS).

Beginning July 1, organizations must comply with new federal rules on disclosure of investment, fee and expense information to employees in their retirement plans. ERS is set up to help organizations meet these new regulations.

ERS complements Mennonite Retirement Trust, the church retirement plan of Mennonite Church USA that Everence administers. MRT is available to Mennonite Church USA congregations and related organizations while ERS is open to any organization.—*Everence*

Mennonite leaders support Native groups

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—On May 5, Mennonite Church Canada executives attended a locally organized, public auction at the Manitoba Legislature in Winnipeg in support of the Yinka-Dene Alliance's resistance to the development of Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline.

The planned pipeline will link Alberta's oil sands with the west coast, extending through traditional First Nations territories in the Fraser River Watershed. The Yinka-Dene Alliance includes Nadleh Whut'en, Nak'azdli, Takla Lake, Saik'uz, and Wet'suwet'en First Nations of northern British Columbia.

The following day, Steve Heinrichs, director of Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry, attended a water ceremony in Winnipeg as part of a cross-country demonstration by the Yinka-Dene Alliance. Will Braun of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg presented a letter of support to a representative of Coastal First Nations who was traveling with the Yinka-Dene Alliance.—*Mennonite Church Canada*

'Foster care' as we await full adoption

Sara Dick is associate pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

This morning I rode bike to school with my new foster child. She has lived with me for a week as I write this, and she has been awaiting adoption for over a year.

Two days into her stay, she asked me if I was going to adopt her. "I don't know," I told her. What a devastating question for a 9-year-old to need to ask, and for her caretaker (me) not to be able to answer!

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:22-23).

We groan inwardly as we await the fullness of God's claim on our lives, yet we are already claimed as "heirs of God," in Paul's words—much like my foster daughter longs for the fullness of adoption even as she has a safe, loving home with me now.

I imagine creation groaning with labor on her behalf and on behalf of all children who lack safe, loving homes. I picture foxes and oaks and catfish joining their life energies toward the reconciliation of so many broken human families, called to this effort by their Creator.

We can feel the labor pains of birthing a peaceful world not only in foster care homes and social service agencies but elsewhere, too: in neighborhoods and towns, where people work to prevent violence or hunger from taking lives, and in wildernesses, where nature is allowed to thrive, safeguarded from human greed.

The apostle Paul writes, "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Romans 8:19). Along with creation we wonder, Who are the children of God? Am I? Are you? Are foster children and orphans and refugees and homeless people all children of God?

If asked in church, we might all nod our heads yes, but in moments of conflict or despair, we might truly question: Am I God's child? Are you, too? Can we really be a family, all adopted by the same divine Parent?

We are a people adopted by God with a history of many glorious adoptions, beginning in the Hebrew Scripture: Pharoah's daughter adopted Moses when she found him floating among the reeds on the bank of a river. Naomi and her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth adopted each other when their husbands died. Mordecai adopted his cousin Esther, who saved the Jewish people from persecution by her king-husband.

In the Gospels, Joseph adopted Mary's son Jesus, even though she became pregnant before they were married. And Jesus, as he hung dying on the cross, instructed his mother and the beloved disciple to adopt one another.

Paul develops the adoption theme as he writes in Romans, "you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption" (8:15). So the opposite of a spirit of slavery and fear is a spirit of adoption? This spirit of adoption is available to all who accept their invitation into God's family.

Paul writes passionately about being "set free" to live out God's desire for us and for all creation. Children in the foster-care "system" long to be set free from worry about home and family and to find a place where they can be safe and loved.

Picking up the theme again in Galatians, Paul writes, "you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God." From what fear or bondage might you yet want to be freed? And into what life or family might you yet want to be adopted?

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9).

Jesus calls us to make peace in small and large ways, in our homes and in faraway places. We are already children of God before we do this, but we become more fully adopted daughters and sons of God's peace when we share and rejoice in Jesus' peace.

The message of reassurance today on my favorite prayer site (www.sacredspace.ie) speaks to God's loving adoption of each of us: "Love changes everything, and my troubles and fears are to be put in their place within the limitless love God has for me. This is the peace Jesus offers, not a life free of challenges or suffering."

In the church, we find mentors and companions, much like foster parents and siblings, who foster faith within us and help us face our challenges and suffering.

The term "foster care" is exactly what we might hope for in the church: nurture that promotes the growth of our whole selves—body, mind and spirit—and the growth of communities of peace, as we await the fullness of our adoption by God with Christ.

In the church, we find mentors and companions, much like foster parents and siblings, who foster faith within us.

Should we update *Martyrs Mirror*?

In 1562, Anabaptists in the Netherlands secretly published a small collection of martyr accounts—along with hymns, confessions, and devotional reflections on faithful Christian discipleship—in a book titled *Sacrifice Unto the Lord* (Het Offer des Herren). By 1600, 10 more editions of *Sacrifice Unto the Lord* appeared, each adding additional material as stories of suffering and persecution continued to unfold. In the course of the following century, Dutch Anabaptists published at least eight more martyrologies, culminating in 1660 with Thieleman van Braght's *Bloody Theater*. Today that book is better known to us as *Martyrs Mirror*, the title of a revised edition in 1685 that included accounts of recent persecution among the Swiss Brethren and 104 dramatic illustrations by the Mennonite artist Jan Luycken.

Oddly enough, however, with the publication of *Martyrs Mirror* the lively tradition of gathering and preserving stories of costly discipleship came to a sudden, inexplicable, end. After 1685, the "canon was closed." Although *Martyrs Mirror* would become something of an icon in later Mennonite communities, republished many times in German and English translation, its basic content has not changed since the late 17th century.

Yet stories of costly discipleship within various parts of the Anabaptist-Mennonite church persisted in subsequent centuries, especially in the Russian Mennonite tradition and among Anabaptist-related groups in North America during times of war. Moreover, faithfulness to Christ in the face of adversity continues to be a persistent and widespread reality in many parts of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship today.

For some time now, the Mennonite Historical Society and the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen (Ind.) College have been exploring the possibility of a project that could renew the tradition of gathering and publishing stories of costly discipleship, with a special focus on the experiences of Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in the global South—a new volume of *Martyrs Mirror*, perhaps, that extends the story into the 21st century.

To be sure, the idea faces lots of challenges. Since no single group "owns" *Martyrs Mirror* or its legacy, such a project would have to be collaborative, including a wide variety of Anabaptist-Mennonite communities. Determining appropriate criteria for what stories or testimonies to include is another significant challenge. Equally complex are deeper questions of motivation and goals—how one tells stories, especially stories of persecution and suffering, is never a simple undertaking. Although *Martyrs Mirror* has offered a powerful reminder that following Jesus often entails a cost, it may also have contributed to a tendency in some Anabaptist-Mennonite circles to claim those stories as a badge of pride, even arrogance. Holding on to a memory of suffering can foster an unhealthy "victim mentality" or promote a caricature of other Christians as "oppressors." Clearly, Anabaptist-Mennonites are not unique in their stories of suffering; neither should suffering ever be regarded as an end in itself.

Being attentive to stories of faithfulness amid adversity is a first step toward healing and reconciliation.

Yet our tradition has long recognized that followers of Jesus are called to be attentive to the most vulnerable among us—to listen carefully to their stories and to respond as we are able. "Bearing witness" to the pain, suffering and vulnerability of other brothers and sisters is a first step in "bearing one another's burdens." One Mennonite leader from the global South, who faced death threats for his role as an intermediary in a violent civil war, recently said, "Knowing that others were praying for us— knowing that if I died I would not be forgotten—was a great comfort when we were filled with fear."

At its best, being attentive to stories of faithfulness amid adversity is a first step toward healing and reconciliation. By naming our vulnerabilities, we are forced to acknowledge our dependence on God and on each other. Bringing such stories to our attention has the potential of challenging our spiritual complacency. And sharing such stories can help congregations and individuals find points of connection across boundaries of nation, class, race or ethnicity.

If you have thoughts, opinions or convictions about the project, please give voice to them at www.anabaptistwiki.org. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

The mainstream media addresses Christianity

For decades the mainstream media generally ignored religion. Now we see articles on religion, which is a major factor in American society, with some regularity. For example, the April 9 issue of *Newsweek* proclaimed on its cover, "Forget the Church; Follow Jesus," while the April 16 cover of *Time* ran the headline "Rethinking Heaven." Even more notable than the prevalence of articles on religion is that many are written with some understanding of religion.

Even though I don't agree with everything in the two articles I've mentioned, they are worth reading and discussing.

Andrew Sullivan, a Catholic, writes in *Newsweek* about "The Forgotten Jesus." He laments how in America faith has become too politicized. Early in the article he asks two questions: "What does it matter how strictly you proclaim your belief in various doctrines if you do not live as these doctrines demand? What is politics if not a dangerous temptation toward controlling others rather than reforming oneself?"

He refers to Thomas Jefferson's Bible, from which he removed all but those passages he thought reflected the actual teachings of Jesus. Jefferson (and Sullivan, apparently) considered this "a simpler, purer, apolitical Christianity." That's naïve, to say the least.

Sullivan goes on to point out that organized religion is in decline, largely because churches have pursued power rather than faithfulness to Jesus' teachings. He notes the Catholic hierarchy being exposed as "enabling, and then covering up, an international conspiracy to abuse and rape countless youths and children." Mainline Protestant churches have declined rapidly, he writes, while Evangelical Protestants, to give one example, is the group that American pollsters have found to be most supportive of torturing terror suspects. He writes: "This version of Christianity could not contrast more strongly with Jesus' constant refrain: 'Be not afraid.' "

Sullivan claims that Christianity (and he means in America; he ignores Christianity in other parts of the globe) is in crisis. He notes that "many Christians now embrace materialist self-help rather than ascetic self-denial," that "the fastest-growing segment of belief among the young is atheism" and that "many have turned away from organized Christianity and toward 'spirituality.' "

His solution? Christianity needs to go back to Jesus by emulating Francis of Assisi, who did not seek power but lived nonviolently.

Sullivan says this does not imply a privatization of faith, which has been a typical American response to religion. He writes that great injustices, such as slavery, imperialism, totalitarianism and segregation, "require spiritual mobilization and public witness." But the greatest examples of such movements renounce power and embrace nonviolence.

He almost sounds like a Mennonite.

In the *Time* article, "Heaven Can't Wait," Jon Meacham, also a Christian, notes that while 85 percent of Americans believe in heaven, "we don't necessarily agree on what heaven is."

Meacham writes that many now argue that "the alleviation of the evident pain and injustice of the world is the ongoing work that Jesus began and the means of bringing into being what the New Testament authors meant when they spoke of heaven."

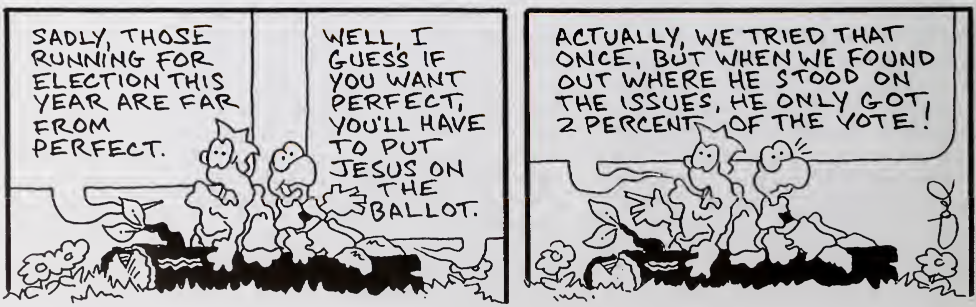
Others, such as Erik Thoennes of Biola University, think this focus "tends to come from white dudes wearing skinny jeans who live in the suburbs and not poor, suffering people."

Meacham seems to agree with this as the work of religion: "bringing reality closer to conformity with theocentric aspirations in a world in which loving one another as we would be loved is a sacred act and a way of expanding the dominion of God—or heaven—in the world."

Again, it's worth pondering.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


SADLY, THOSE RUNNING FOR ELECTION THIS YEAR ARE FAR FROM PERFECT.
WELL, I GUESS IF YOU WANT PERFECT, YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT JESUS ON THE BALLOT.
ACTUALLY, WE TRIED THAT ONCE, BUT WHEN WE FOUND OUT WHERE HE STOOD ON THE ISSUES, HE ONLY GOT 2 PERCENT OF THE VOTE!

"Nuns have always had a different set of priorities from that of bishops. The bishops are interested in power. The nuns are interested in the powerless."
—Catholic author Gary Wills in response to the Vatican's crackdown on U.S. nuns, in the *New York Review of Books*

Capital punishment does not deter crime, says study

In the more than three decades since the national moratorium on the death penalty was lifted, there is no reliable research to determine whether capital punishment has served as a deterrent, according to a review by the National Research Council. The review, partially funded by the Justice Department's National Institute of Justice, found that the major shortcomings in all previous studies included "incomplete or implausible" measures of how potential murderers perceive the risk of execution as a possible consequence of their actions and that previous research never considered the impact of lesser punishments, such as life in prison without the possibility of parole.—*New York Times*

Violence harms children's DNA, says study

Children who are exposed to violence experience wear and tear to their DNA that is similar to that seen in aging, according to a new study that may help explain why they face a heightened risk of mental and physical disorders as adults.

In a long-term study of 118 pairs of identical twins, researchers at Duke University found that boys and girls who had experienced violence had shorter genetic structures called telomeres than youngsters who had more peaceful upbringings. The children in the former group had been physically abused by an adult or bullied frequently or had witnessed domestic violence between the ages of 5 and 10. And the more types of violence a child had experienced, the faster his or her telomeres eroded, said study leader Idan Shalev, who published the findings April 24 in the journal Molecular Psychiatry.—*Los Angeles Times*

127,000

Missionaries sent from the United States in 2010. It's the largest sending country in the world.

32,400

Missionaries sent to the United States in 2010. It's the largest receiving country in the world.
—*Christianity Today*

Protect the poor, say Catholic bishops

A week after House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan claimed his Catholic faith inspired the Republicans' cost-cutting budget plan, the nation's Catholic bishops reiterated their demand that the federal budget protect the poor and said the GOP measure "fails to meet these moral criteria." That and other strongly worded judgments on the GOP budget proposal flew in a flurry of letters from leading bishops to the chairmen of a key congressional committee.—*Sojourners*

Sex and young evangelicals

The statistics, some evangelicals say, can no longer be ignored. Eighty percent of young evangelicals have engaged in premarital sex, according to a new video from the National Association of Evangelicals, and almost a third of evangelicals' unplanned pregnancies end in abortion.—*Religion News Service*

28%

of ministers reported they had at one time been forced to leave their jobs due to personal attacks and criticism from a small faction within their congregations.—*Christian Century*

Muslim terrorism a 'miniscule threat'

The threat of homegrown Islamic terrorism is "tiny" and often exaggerated by government officials, a leading anti-terrorism expert said in a report released Feb. 8. Charles Kurzman, a sociologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a researcher at the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, said 20 Muslim Americans were indicted for violent terrorist plots last year, down from 26 in 2010. Kurzman's report, "Muslim-American Terrorism in the Decade Since 9/11," said that compared to the 14,000 murders in the United States last year, the potential for Muslim Americans to take up terrorism is "tiny."—*Religion News Service*

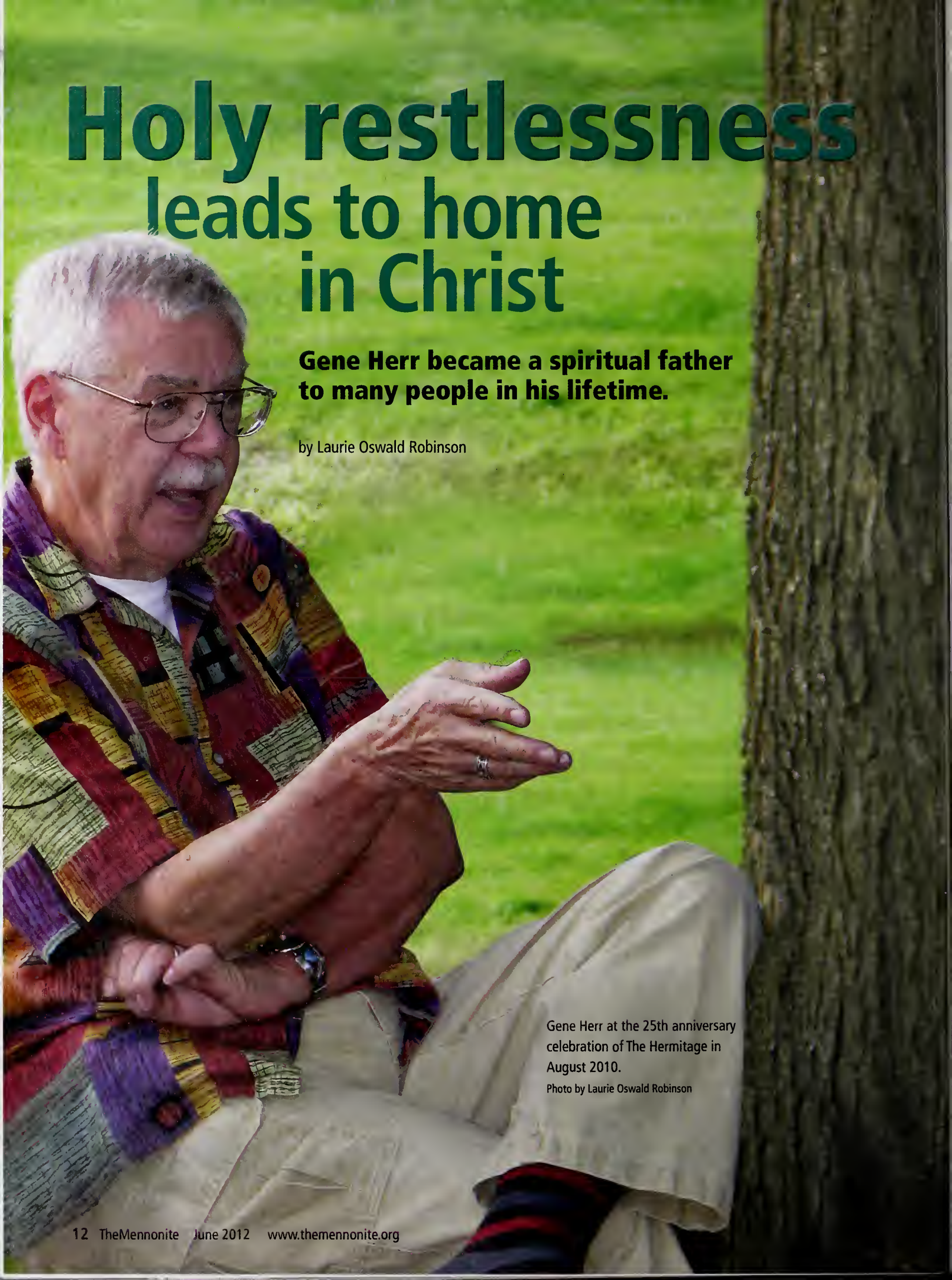
Environmental notes

- Worldwide emissions of carbon dioxide rose by 5.9 percent in 2010, the largest jump in any year since the industrial revolution.
- In 2011, the United States suffered a record dozen climate disasters causing damages of $1 billion or more each.
- The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that Yellowstone grizzly bears deserve protection under the Endangered Species Act. A major threat, notes the court, is climate change.
- Since 1979, 1.4 million square miles of sea ice, an area equivalent to 44 percent of the United States, or all the states east of Texas, has disappeared from the Arctic Ocean.—*Sierra*

Holy restlessness leads to home in Christ

Gene Herr became a spiritual father to many people in his lifetime.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson



Gene Herr at the 25th anniversary celebration of The Hermitage in August 2010.
Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

A few days before he died on Jan. 1 in Hesston, Kan., the late H. Eugene (Gene) Herr said to his daughter, Ellen Awe, "I don't understand why I am not going anywhere."

The comment didn't surprise Awe. Her father, a leader and visionary in the Mennonite church, had always lived with a holy restlessness. It was born from his passion to follow God's call, even when to do so required leaving safe and familiar lands for daring and new territories.

To his family and friends, he seemed he was moving as a pilgrim on his way to the promised land. They saw his movement as not born of one who was lost and trying to find his way "home" alone. They believed it as born out of passion for being truly found in Christ. He desired to give himself so fully to Jesus that no mile of God's intended journey for him would be left untraveled.

But on this day, it was time for him to rest a bit before traversing the final leg of his earthly trek.

Awe replied to her father, "It's because you really can't go anywhere right now, Dad. It's OK for you to just be here and to let us love you. ..."

"He accepted this and put his trust in us and graciously let us make decisions for him," she says. "The concept of his 'terminal' illness included both moving and resting. ... He was terminal but not as in an end. He was in a terminal, the place where one waits for the next leg of one's travels."

As he battled brain cancer for two years, it seemed God was calling Herr in his final days to integrate his doing with being. The integration was a model of the Christian discipleship Gene and Mary, his wife of 56 years, shared with fellow believers in the Mennonite church and beyond.

They believed this "being"—or contemplative —focus was a balancing and complementing element to the active, service-oriented lifestyle they had imbibed as Mennonites. Contemplation involves becoming still, praying, listening, journaling and reading the Christian classics, all with the goal of pursuing one's call in Christ more fully.

Paradoxically, his forging this deeper union of being in Christ led Herr into an active life as a pioneer of many new ministries in the Mennonite church, along with Mary. He offered his gifts of innovation, vision and pioneering in various roles through five decades of ministry.

These included that of pastor of several congregations, churchwide youth ministry leader, spiritual director, Christian education director in a local congregation, a participant in reconciliation ministry in Ireland and a minister to the homeless in Newton.

"I so appreciated how he dared to pursue those things that were not always in the now but a vision to be realized in the future, as well as his living out what he believed needed to be done in order to realize those dreams," says Mary Herr, who lives in Newton, Kan., where she still offers spiritual direction to fellow pilgrims.

"He was always starting things that others said couldn't be done and putting flesh on the ideas that others didn't dare to dream about," she says. "There were many times I helped ground these visions in the practical realities we faced along the way."

> He was always starting things that others said couldn't be done and putting flesh on the ideas that others didn't dare to dream about.
> —Mary Herr

Blazing new trails with focus on both outward and inward discipleship

As the couple pursued their visionary calling, the wider church did not always understand or affirm the new territories they explored. Eventually, however, many pastors across the church came to appreciate the pastoral nurture they received from the couple at The Hermitage, the retreat center they founded in the mid-1980s in Three Rivers, Mich.

"The spiritual direction that I received for 17 years from Gene profoundly impacted me," says Duane Beck, pastor at Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church. "He really helped me go deeper into my inner spirit and into my relationship with Christ.

"In my times with Gene, as well as when I spent time in listening prayer and writing in my journal, I came to understand that as a pastor I minister primarily out of my relationship to Christ and not out of my book learning or academic, professional education.

From left, David and Naomi Wenger, co-directors of The Hermitage, and Gene and Mary Herr at the 25th anniversary celebration of The Hermitage in August 2010. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

"Gene and Mary launched our deeper practices of prayer throughout the church and helped us all balance our outward discipleship of service with an intentional attention to our inner spirit, where Christ is forming us."

In decades prior to their retreat ministry, the theme of balancing the outward and inward aspects of the Christian walk also marked other trails the couple blazed. Those trails included Gene's helping shape new discipleship programs for young people across the former Mennonite Church's Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF) ministry.

We are all called to leave home—that place of comfort and security—at some time in response to God's call.—Eric Haarer

"Our paths crossed years ago, when Gene was the first executive youth secretary for the former Mennonite Church, and I was a college student and then elected to the churchwide Mennonite youth cabinet," writes Marion Bontrager, a faculty member in the Bible and ministry department at Hesston (Kan.) College.

"Gene was a visionary, positive leader who looked to the former Mennonite Church and beyond for church and youth ministry visions and models for calling youth to Christ and nurturing them in the faith," Bontrager writes. "In a number of ways, Gene was a person ahead of his time in the church."

The Herrs further fleshed out the theme of discipling young people by founding a new Voluntary Service discipleship program in Phoenix, Ariz. They guided young adults in discerning their call in God as they made the transition from their early lives into mature adulthood.

They fathered and mothered many such young people in the faith, including Eric Haarer, who was baptized a Mennonite and eventually became a Catholic priest. Haarer was one of many such "offspring" of the Herrs who came for Herr's memorial service at Hesston Mennonite Church on Jan. 6 as well as his funeral Mass on Jan. 7 at Saint Mary Catholic Church in Newton.

In his homily at the Mass, Haarer said, "The theme I want to focus on comes mainly from the gospel: Abide in me. That is, make your home in me as I make my home in you. That search for the

What he did do was find ways to make the riches of the pre-Reformation spiritual tradition, out of which the 16th-century Anabaptist movement emerged, available to 20th-century Mennonites.—Ivan Kauffman

place of belonging, for home, for where one abides, and how one finds that place by following God's call along a difficult path, is a theme that permeated Gene's life.

"Gene was orphaned at a young age. … That wound became fuel for his life's journey. … Gene was a restless man. … It is that restlessness that caused our Lord to leave his home in Galilee, sojourn in the desert, become an itinerant preacher, following the road to his destiny, his home on the cross.

"By being orphaned … Gene … was thrust into the desert—a step we all are called to make as pilgrim people. We are all called to leave home—that place of comfort and security—at some time in response to God's call."

Leaving home and coming home

In response to God's call, Haarer said, Gene, a lifelong Mennonite, was received into the Catholic Church. Even as Gene fathered Haarer in contemplative spiritual practices, it was Haarer who in the early 1990s first entered the Catholic Church. It was years later, in 2005, when Gene took that step.

This step wasn't a rejection of his Mennonite roots but the fulfillment of a lifelong faith as an Anabaptist, says Ivan Kauffman, who with Gene and others helped develop Bridgefolk, a movement of sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who come together to celebrate each other's traditions, explore each other's practices and honor each other's contribution to the mission of Christ's church.

"Gene did not turn his back on his Mennonite heritage or on the Mennonite church," Kauffman says. "He continued to serve the Mennonite community in various ways to the end of his life. What he did do was find ways to make the riches of the pre-Reformation spiritual tradition, out of which the 16th-century Anabaptist movement emerged, available to 20th-century Mennonites.

"He and … Mary did so in ways that were helpful to hundreds of other Mennonites. In the end, however, Gene came to believe he should not just borrow from the Catholic tradition [but] become a full participant in it."

Gene testifies to this perspective in an essay he wrote: "I am a Roman Catholic not because I have a file folder full of arguments to prove this is superior to all other ecclesial groups but because this is a way of living into a tradition that connects me to God's people in a fullness of faith, hope and love across millennia."

Forging family bonds at home and in the church

Family for their father, say his two sons, Karl and Phillip, included not only his biological family but also his adopted brothers and sisters in Christ's church. His early sense of abandonment perhaps is what also gifted him to abandon himself to Christ and to remain present to so many people on their journey.

"Because of who he was, we always shared our dad with lots of people," Phil Herr says. "I think this ability to connect with so many people was his special thing that he offered the world, and what touched his world so significantly as a result."

Karl Herr says he believes his father's struggle with following the call to be a visionary and pioneer in new territories—a struggle he wasn't fully aware of until his father's passing—shaped his ability to minister to others and to touch lives with the imprint of Christ.

"When I was in Kansas recently, my mother pulled out a notebook of Dad's free-verse poems," he says. "Many were pretty serious reflections on his personal walk with God and described that struggle, but his joy of living also came through.

"Since his passing, I am better able to appreciate the complexities—and impact—of his life. …. During the various memorial services, I was struck by the number of people who referred to him as their spiritual father. I'm very grateful for that legacy."

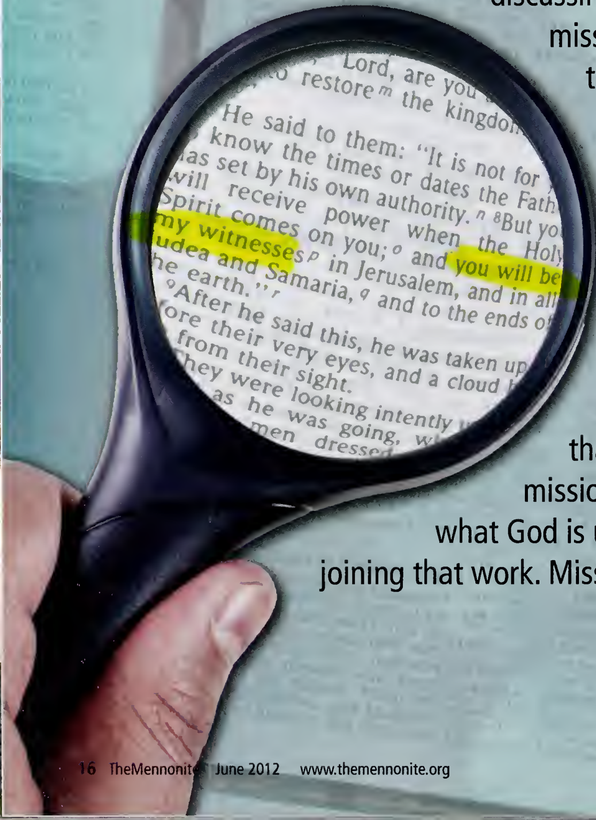
Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

Bearing witness to our missional God

A proposal to replace the word 'missional' with 'bearing witness'

by Ron Adams

At the Mennonite Church USA gathering in Pittsburgh last July, delegates were instructed to spend time discussing what it means to be missional. The moderator of that session began by telling us what missional means and what it does not mean. Missional is not about program, he said. Missional is not what your congregation's outreach committee does. Missional is an adjective that describes God. Being missional means figuring out what God is up to and then joining that work. Missional is our calling.


Acts
Lord, are you
restore the kingdom
He said to them: "It is not for
know the times or dates the Father
has set by his own authority. But you
will receive power when the Holy
Spirit comes on you; and you will be
my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all
Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of
the earth."
After he said this, he was taken up
before their very eyes, and a cloud
from their sight.
They were looking intently
as he was going,
men dressed

Even after the explanation, our table group remained fuzzy about the whole thing. Much of our conversation was around trying to define the term. We shared stories of the mission programs in our congregations and learned about the movement of the Spirit in our various communities. But I left the conversation feeling unsettled by our befuddlement about the word missional. No matter how hard we tried, we kept on slipping back into the language of program and outreach.

Then it occurred to me. Maybe the problem was not with me or with the members of our table group. Maybe the problem is that word: missional.

We Mennonites have been using this word for at least the last 10 years. Yet we always need to explain what we mean whenever we use it. We preface every missional conversation with a definition, with what we don't mean and what we do mean when we say the word.

Something is wrong here. We are reasonably smart people. Well-educated and diligent in our church work. Yet, with the exception of a few experts among us, we can't seem to find our way toward a comfortable usage of missional. This suggests that the problem is not with us. The word is the problem. And words matter.

I humbly propose that we jettison the word. It does not serve us well. In its place, I propose: bearing witness. I propose the change not just because of the confusion caused by the missional word. In his final words to the disciples, Jesus commanded them to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). Christ's followers have been compelled to bear witness ever since. Bearing witness is rooted in the Scripture.

I also propose the change for what I think are sound theological reasons. The underlying assumption of missional language is that God is actively engaged with and in our world. That assumption is essential. God is missional. We are not the primary actors in salvation history. We are not little messiahs, responsible to complete the work begun by Christ. God's Spirit is still at large in the world. And the coming redemption is being ushered in by God through Christ. To all of this we are witnesses.

This is especially important for us Mennonites to remember. We tend toward what, back in the day, was called "works righteousness." I don't mean that we believe that if we are good and do good we will be saved by virtue of that goodness. We are too well trained theologically to believe such a thing.

What I mean by "works righteousness" is this: We like to keep busy. We like to keep prodding things along, making the world a better place. We work to build the kingdom of God. We say we are Christ's hands and feet. None of this is necessarily problematic. We have done much good in our pursuit of such goals.

But underneath it all is a pervasive anxiety. This anxiety springs from the fact that we are not entirely sure God is willing and able to make all things new. We do not believe what we pray, that God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So we seek to take control. We apply the word missional to ourselves. We presume to lend God a hand, calling ourselves God's missional partners, by which we really mean we are the ones on whom the work depends.

Consider the denomination's call to plant more churches. Not a bad thing at all. If the Spirit calls a congregation to plant a church, I say: Godspeed.

But what often drives that call is the fear that we are dying. Rather than marveling at what God is doing among and through us, we try to increase production. Rather than trusting that the Spirit is active in our grayest congregations, we turn away from them in embarrassment as evidence of our approaching end. Rather than merely finding Conrad Kanagy's *Road Signs for the Journey* sociologically interesting, we treat it like a prophecy announcing our demise.

Rather than trusting that the Spirit is active in our grayest congregations, we turn away from them in embarrassment as evidence of our approaching end.

In short, we act as though God's head is no longer in the game, which means it falls on us to keep things moving on toward glory. If God is not going to fix the church, then we better well hop to it. Let the dead bury their dead. We'll plant something new. And all will be well.

The word missional feeds our anxiety. It tells us we must find out where God is and what God is doing and lend a hand. Though missional language can teach us to recognize that God is the prime mover, when applied to the church it implies that we are equal partners in God's work. Without us the whole project crumbles. If we don't do something and quick, the church will fade away, and all will be lost. The pressure is on, just like it always ▶

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has been. We've changed the prescription, but that same sick feeling remains.

Hence my call to exchange the word missional for the words bearing witness. At first hearing, bearing witness sounds passive, which is a conversation stopper for us Mennonites. As I said, we like to keep busy.

What if our need to be busy is symptomatic of a fundamental lack of trust?

But what if our need to be busy is symptomatic of a fundamental lack of trust? What if it is a side effect of the pervasive anxiety that afflicts us as a denomination? Might it be good for us to just keep still and trust that God is God and that, because of this central fact, all will come out right in the end?

In fact, bearing witness is not passive at all. It means keeping awake to the movement of God in the world. It means having eyes to see the redemptive work of Christ all around us. It means keeping watch for the always active Holy Spirit. It means bearing witness to what we have seen.

We do not do this only with words, though they are important. In testifying to what we see we offer a glimpse of the deeper reality that otherwise goes unnoticed. We name what is otherwise unnamed. We invite folks to see the world for what it is: the focus of God's loving intentions. We shore up the faith of sisters and brothers who have lost sight of God's work in the world. Bearing witness in our speech is necessary.

But we also bear witness by living as if what we preach is true. For example, we claim that God loves all human beings equally and without regard to race. We bear witness to that claim by living as if it were so. We seek to dismantle racism. Not because God will otherwise walk away and let racism thrive. But because Christ has already torn down the dividing wall. We bear witness by learning how to live like it were so.

We claim that peace is God's will for humanity. So we seek peace and pursue it. Not because God will otherwise let us keep killing each other but because we want to bear witness to God's will. We serve the poor and vulnerable not out of some messianic attempt to make the world right but in bearing witness to the world as God is remaking it.

No, bearing witness is not passive.

But it does put the theological shoe back on the correct foot. It makes clear that God is the one who will make all things new. God is indeed still at work. God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The church can rest into its firm foundation, even during times of change. We may safely abide in the loving embrace of Christ Jesus, who holds the whole world in his hands. The promises God made will be kept.

This means we can lay down our anxious efforts to push God's work along and instead simply keep our eyes open and tell everyone around us what we have seen. We can start living into what has already come. We can trust that God, who promised that it would be so, will make it so. We can let go of the anxiety that weighs us down and lift our heads and rejoice in what God is doing to save the world.

We can bear witness to God's mission in the world.

Ron Adams is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

A day care in Bolivia

A Mennonite church brings hope to its neighborhood.

by Isaac Shue

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.—Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

Dust fills the air as a truck hauling Mendocina soda flies past a farmer in his buggy being pulled by a malnourished horse. The farmer is bringing his daily harvest of milk to the city to sell at a local market. Floating through the extreme heat and humidity of Bolivia, the dust covers the faces of a mother with her two children, waiting patiently to cross the road. As a break emerges in the traffic, 4-year-old Sofia Sandoval dashes across the street carrying her backpack, as her mother tries to run without waking up her 4-month-old baby. It is just before 8 in the morning as Sofia wipes sweat from her brow as she continues walking to day care.

Sofia and her mother, Tatiana, arrive at the day care in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Photo provided

> Education is not a priority but an experienced "babysitter" until one is old enough to find work or have a baby.

Sofia lives in the neighborhood Libertad, on the outskirts of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, a neighborhood where life has never been easy. For the people living there, finishing school is almost unheard of, and going to college is not even a dream. Education is not a priority but an experienced "babysitter" until one is old enough to find work or have a baby. The majority of the women have children at an early age and are forced to drop out of school and care for their children. While many of the women start having children at age 16, by the time they are 20 it is common to have three children. In a neighborhood where the average person makes around $4 a day, raising three children can be more than a nightmare. Being forced to work, mothers in Libertad have no other option than to leave their children, though not old enough to go to school, at home alone all day, wandering the streets and having to face crime.

In the midst of life and its problems, as many people turn to drugs and alcohol, few in Libertad seek refuge in a small church in a near-by neighborhood, Moliendita. This particular Mennonite ▶

church has five regularly attending families and numerous children who come on their own. Living in and being a part of the neighborhood, the people are aware of the problem of unsupervised children.

Having the same life as many of the people in the neighborhood, it was hard to help, but they took what they had and went to work. They had a church building, they had people seeking a change, and they had God—the three ingredients that helped start the Guarderia Samuelito.

After many hard days of painting, making chairs and tables, and preparing a schedule for the children, on Aug. 28, 2006, the Mennonite church Esmirna opened its doors to the children of the neighborhood. Not having great resources to market the new day care, the first year was slow but successful. Nine students filled the room at the church each day of the first year, 26 students the second year and 56 students in the third year. They kept growing and growing, and it was hard to tell people there was no space. The church only had a limited amount, and it was completely filled. This did not dampen the will of the Mennonites in Bolivia or keep them from helping the children of Libertad and Moliendita. Instead it gave them a new goal, a dream to expand and double their numbers. Once again, putting their faith to work, they prayed.

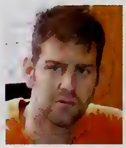
Today, parents can go to work, knowing their children are cared for and getting a solid diet.

Soon they found an empty lot for sale across the highway in the neighborhood Cochabamba. It seemed to fit the day care and their future plans perfectly. Churches in the United States and Canada caught word and sent volunteers, helping construct the new day care. In two years, half was finished, and children attended for the 2010 school year (February through December).

Today, Sofia, along with 76 other children from 55 families, 10 paid staff and two volunteers, make their way to the day care each day either by foot, microbus or taxi. Parents can go to work, knowing their children are cared for and getting a solid diet. While in the day care, the children (ranging from 6 months to 6 years) follow a strict schedule each day, teaching them the importance of routine, which is lacking in the neighborhoods where they live. Children are served two meals and two snacks each day and are bathed, their teeth are brushed, they sing songs, have workbooks and play time. While health and cleanliness are stressed to the children and their families, Christianity and the church is the priority in the day care, and they spread the love of Christ with each empanada (cheese-filled pastry), each song and every hug and kiss the children receive.

The Guarderia Samuelito has started construction on the second half of their building, with a conference room, offices for the two directors, an infirmary, a room designed for babies, with proper changing stations and cribs, and housing for volunteer groups. Upon completion of the project, the Guarderia will be able to help just over 80 more children, with a capacity of 150. The foundation is set and everything ready to go. But they just lack the funding to finish it. About $140,000 separates the Bolivian Mennonite Church and the Guarderia Samuelito from helping that many more children get out of the streets and into a Christian environment.

In the summer of 2001, I visited Santa Cruz, Bolivia, with my youth group from Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kan., on a short-term mission trip. While in Bolivia, our youth group worked in a small village building a "camp" on the outskirts of Santa Cruz named Don Lorenzo. Being around the Bolivians during these two weeks, I uncovered a passion I never knew I had. The trip sparked in my mind doing mission. The spark finally ignited in 2010, when I went back to Bolivia and served a one-year term with Mennonite Mission Network's Radical Journey program. My placement in Bolivia was with the Guarderia Samuelito during the week and working with the youth in Don Lorenzo on the weekends. I found an instant love for the people and the culture. At the end of my placement, I felt emptiness in my heart, wanting to continue my work there. Today, I am back in Bolivia independently, working with the children of the day care, serving as a teacher in the room for 2- to 4-year-olds.



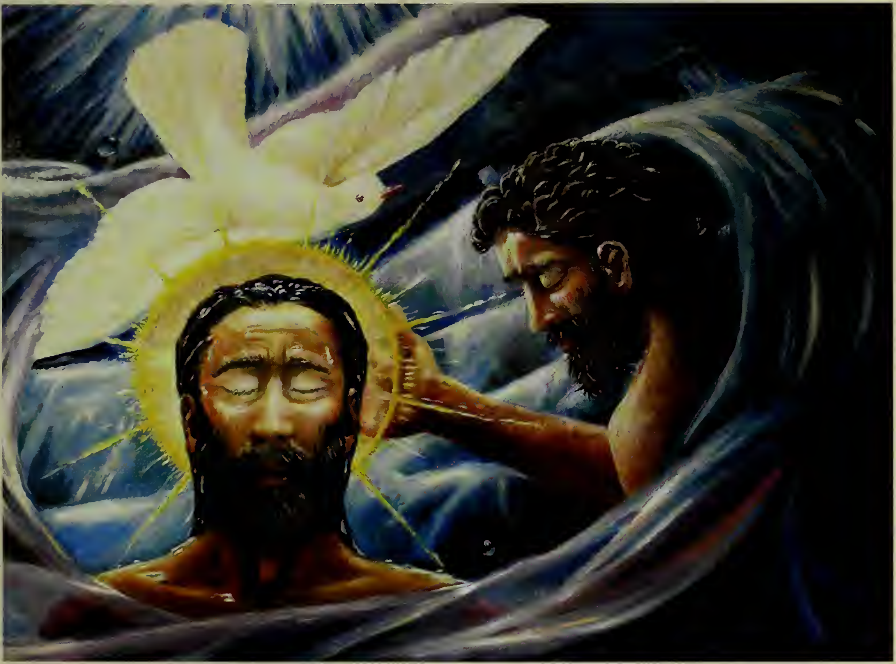
Isaac Shue is a member of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kan. For more information about the day care, the children and ways to support them, financially or in prayer, visit www.caresupportandlove.blogspot.com or email laguarderiasamuelito@gmail.com.

3 ways to God

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." —Mark 1:9-11

A reflection on Trinity Sunday, June 3

by Everett J. Thomas



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The spot in the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized is near the north end of the Dead Sea. The shore of the Dead Sea is the lowest dry land in the world. This means that Jesus' baptism at the beginning of his public ministry signaled that his work would stretch from the lowest dry land to the highest heavens. It covered all.

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This is considered the traditional site of Jesus' baptism, but it is no longer in the Jordan River. The Jordan River valley is an extension of a major earthquake fault line known as the Great African Rift Valley. A series of earthquakes along this fault line moved the course of the river to the west of the site.

The Mark 1 story of Jesus' baptism is also a second unique element in this text: It is the only time that God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit appear together in the Bible. There may be some other occasions when the presence of the Holy Spirit is intimated. But in this scene, Jesus' rebirth (baptism) was attended by the Holy Spirit as a dove and God the Father as a voice.

For most of us, [the Holy Spirit] is the least developed face of God.

In 2007, I was privileged to visit Bethany Beyond Jordan, on the east bank of the Jordan River. According to tradition, this is the spot where Jesus was baptized. An Eastern Orthodox priest baptized or rebaptized with river water or anyone who wanted to go into the river. Because of that experience, I began contemplating the Trinity. Since then, I have observed faithful Christians drawn to one part of the Trinity, rather than all three persons, as their personal way to God. Further, over the past five years, I've also observed how various writers we publish think about God. Here are some of those observations, beginning with the first sentences in the first three articles (in reverse order) from *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*:

Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the eternal Spirit of God, who dwelled in Jesus Christ, who empowers the church, who is the source of our life in Christ, and who is poured out on those who believe as the guarantee of our redemption and of the redemption of creation.—Article 3

The Holy Spirit is the sacred Presence of God. As the ancient Latin says, "Bidden or unbidden, God is here." We don't need to ask God to be with us, because the Spirit is always with us—and waiting for us to notice. The challenge for me is to quiet the noise in my mind and attend to this presence.

For most of us, this is the least developed face of God. We come closest to talking about God's Spirit in our hymns and Scripture songs, such as "Spirit of the Living God," "Holy Spirit, Come with Power" or "Rain Down."

But for some people, life in the Spirit is the primary way they come to God. I observe that for people who primarily come to God this way, their lives are filled with serenity, grace and the fruits of the Spirit. But I've also seen another, less healthy pattern: speaking in tongues and being slain in the Spirit as proofs of faithfulness.

But a helpful understanding of how the Holy Spirit is integrated with God the Father and Jesus comes from the writings of Paul to the church in Corinth: "But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Word of God become flesh. He is the Savior of the world, who has delivered us from the dominion of sin and reconciled us to God by humbling himself and becoming obedient unto death on a cross.—Article 2

In the setting for my work and in my congregation in Goshen, Ind., this is the most important person of the Godhead for many. What matters most is obedience as a disciple to this historical figure who is not present now. But when faith is reduced to formulaic discipleship, it becomes arid and dry. As Stephen Dintaman pointed out in his Feb. 23, 1993, *Gospel Herald* article, such a narrow definition can impoverish the Anabaptist vision.

But there are other ways people come to God through Jesus. For many, Jesus' atoning death on the cross is the central life pulse of their faith. Forgiveness of sins for a life of faithfulness comes primarily when "saved by the blood" of the cross.

Others describe Jesus as "my best friend." I don't resonate with the language but am intrigued by friends and relatives who post Facebook testimonies describing the intimacy of their relationship with Jesus. Those who believe Jesus was a historic figure only may argue that the intimacy being experienced is really the Holy Spirit. However, there is no problem with this because there is no separation between the Holy Spirit, Jesus and God the Father.

As a young adult, I did not want to think about Jesus. This was because of my childhood situation: My father was a firstborn, my mother was a firstborn, my older brother was a firstborn: I was the first person in the family not a firstborn. And then, as a child in Sunday school, I learned that Jesus was a firstborn. I was surrounded by firstborns. So troubling to me was this as a boy that Exodus 12 became my favorite Bible story. I imagined another Passover like the one that killed all the Egyptian firstborns. I'd be in charge.

But now I understand discipleship as accepting the salvation God provided by so loving the world that he gave up his only begotten son. Our calling now is, as President Jimmy Carter said at the Nashville convention in 2001, to be "little Christs."

God the Father

We believe that God exists and is pleased with all who draw near by faith. We worship the one holy and loving God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally.—Article 1

Here we find the Trinity: "a loving God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally."

My father, Leon, imprinted on my young mind what a loving God would be like as a father. Leon was the most loving, gracious and maternal man I've ever known. So it was an easy reach for me as a teenager to accept that the Creator of this world was like my earthly father but with infinitely more love and power. I do realize how fortunate I was to have Leon as my father. Many men spend much of their lives dealing with "father wounds." Many women who were abused by their fathers or saw their mothers abused did not have the same imprint as did I.

While we may follow different paths to put together our faith, it is sometimes difficult to understand the way others put together their relationships with God.

Others, especially in older generations of Mennonites, came to view God the Father as a cruel judge and law enforcer. But Jesus called God Abba. It is a great gift from Leon that I, too, call God Abba.

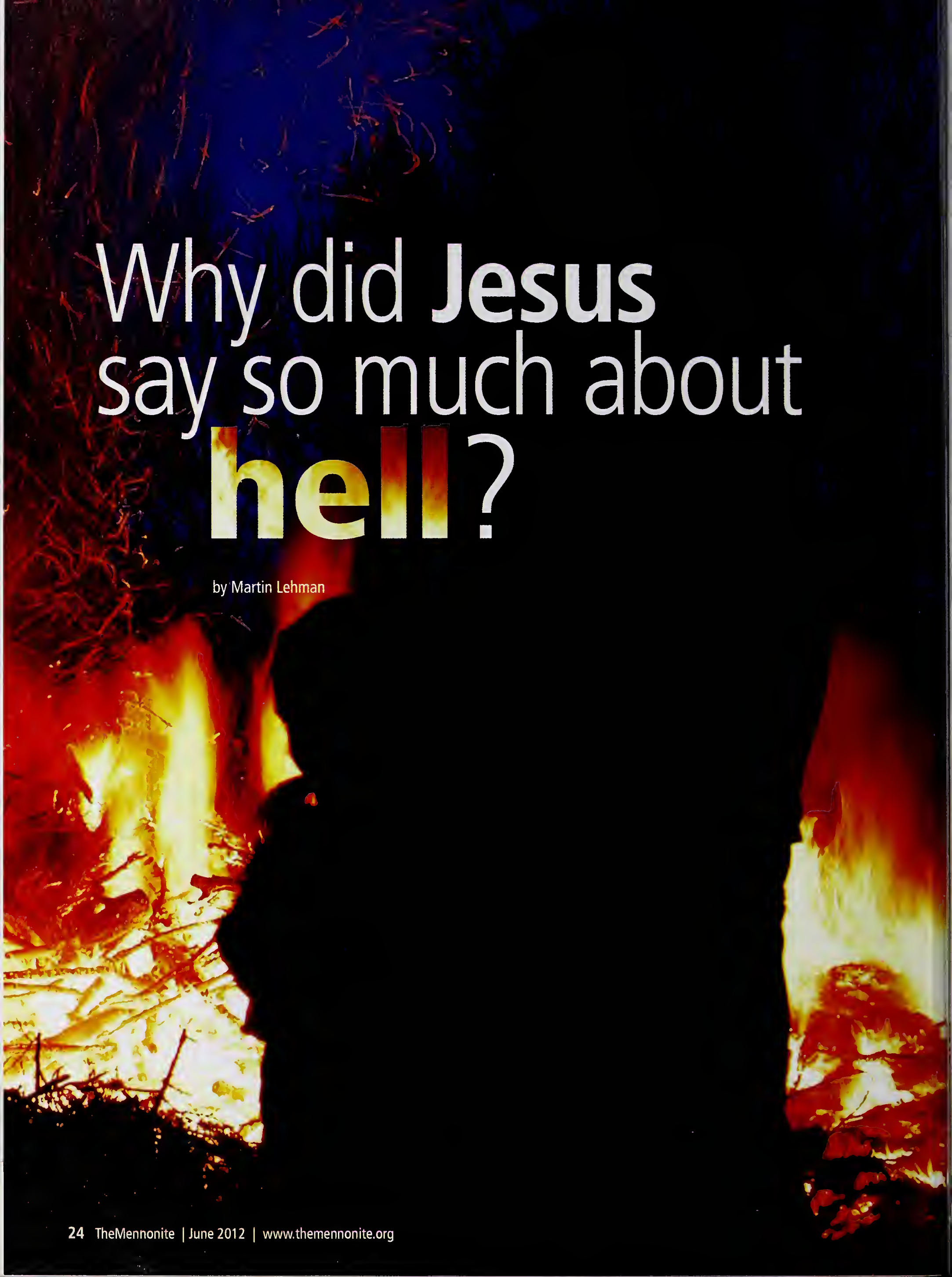
Trinity

So in the Trinity we have three paths to God. While we may follow different paths to put together our faith, it is sometimes difficult to understand the way others put together their relationships with God. As I curate the differences among us in the Letters section of this magazine and listen to differences in the church when it comes to right belief and practice, I wonder whether we could share our testimonies first: How do you come to God? Let me tell you how I come to God.

Among other reasons for doing so, our differences do not change God. For all the ways we may try to create God in our own image, God remains one. The first word of the greatest commandment lays down the imperative to listen, really listen. God is, has always been and will always be one.

"Hear. O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one."

Everett J. Thomas is editor of The Mennonite. *This article is adapted from a sermon he preached on Oct. 2, 2011.*



Why did **Jesus** say so much about **hell**?

by Martin Lehman

For those who have doubts about a literal hell

These thoughts began one night as I sat in my favorite chair for sleeping and dreaming. I am 85, and my wife of 64 years was in the Goshen (Ind.) Hospital recovering from a near-death illness. It is easy to reflect on my life and destiny. I've tried to understand God, be faithful to the Scriptures as I understand them and lead others to Christ.

I empathize with St. Paul when he felt he was "chief of sinners." I was about to baptize a young man, when I asked him to remove the finger ring his mother had given him. Mother and son dropped out of my life. The last I heard of him he was in a tank guarding the gate in the wall separating East and West Berlin. Will God forgive me for causing a little one to stumble?

Some sincere people have a literal view of Scripture that forces them to believe in a literal hell, yet in the privacy of their innermost thoughts they wish they did not need to believe in such a fierce God and terrible destiny. On the other hand, there may be just as many Christians who doubt there is a literal hell, yet their doubt makes them uneasy. I write for all those who doubt as I do and look for some degree of certainty.

Why did Jesus, our Lord and Savior, say so much about hell? Jesus talked as though hell was a real place where sinners receive the ultimate penalty for sin. This seems so out of character for one so compassionate. Yet Jesus warned of a destiny for sinners that included weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and a fire that is not quenched.

Jesus chose the valley of Hinnom or Gehenna as a symbol of hell. In that loathsome valley the heathen had once offered their babies as burnt sacrifices to their gods, and later the filth of ancient Jerusalem was cast out and burned there. The location of this valley is unknown today, other than that it was south of Jerusalem. But the enigma of why a teacher like Jesus said so much about hell continues to be a burden to the church.

A partial solution to the enigma may be in Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount, taken literally as Mennonites are prone to interpret it. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (KJV). How Jesus fulfilled the law is instructive. First, note the words of Jesus. He said, "You have heard that it has been said, but I say unto you." He repeated this critical formula six times in the sermon.

It seems to me Jesus was supplying something the law lacked. For the most part the law was concerned with sinful acts. The Son of God, as a human being tempted in all points as we are, was privy to the desires and emotions that lead to sins. To lust, Jesus said, was to be guilty of adultery, and to hate was to be guilty of murder. To put deeds not yet done under the law makes more binding a law that could not be kept. No wonder both Old and New testaments conclude that all have sinned and that there is none righteous, no not one. You and I know it is true.

This generous Creator God gave the law to show us our need for a Savior and Redeemer, then gave Jesus to bring the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Second, an effective law has a penalty attached. Consider specific penalties attached to the civil laws enacted by Moses at Mt. Sinai. A son who hit or cursed his father, a Sabbath breaker, an adulterer and those guilty of other such heinous crimes were to be put to death, a penalty common in the Old Testament. On the other hand, the Old Testament says little about the fate of those who die, revealing only that every one who died went to "sheol," consistently translated the "grave" in the NIV and most other modern versions and described as a dark, shadowy place from which there was no return. Jesus gave the law what it lacked, a hell of fire as the ultimate penalty for sin. He knew the intent of God and the weakness of humankind. All are under condemnation, all are weak, all are lost; we've all gone astray, every one of us.

▶

My comfort does not come from the law. This generous Creator God gave the law to show us our need for a Savior and Redeemer, then gave Jesus to bring the kingdom of heaven on earth. The best loved verse in the Bible begins with, "God so loved the world that he sent, …" and clearly reveals that God loved the world before Jesus came to earth. Jesus illuminated God's love for people by miracles, parables, acts of kindness and the simple authoritative sayings that drew the masses to him.

This said, it must be acknowledged that Jesus was not a fan of the law. He came to earth because the law had failed to save one soul. When the disciples of Jesus were criticized for "threshing grain" by hand on the Sabbath, Jesus reminded the critics that when King David was hungry he ate some holy bread that priests alone were allowed to eat. Jesus justified his seemingly cavalier attitude toward the law by asserting he was the lord of the Sabbath and had the right to make or break Sabbath rules. He demonstrated that not even a law given by Moses and deemed from God should prevent one from doing good. It was for doing good that Jesus was crucified. He healed the sick on the Sabbath and ate with sinners and the unclean. He was their friend, and everyone knew it. Jesus was perfect, but in the eyes of the hypocrites in power he was not the ideal keeper of the law. To their annoyance he did what only God could do: He forgave sinners. He was their friend. He ate with them.

This universal obeisance will be obtained neither by torture nor compelled by law but by love and grace.

Jesus revealed a twin purpose in his sermon for his coming. He said he came not only to fulfill the law but to fulfill the prophets. Jesus came to usher in a new day, a day of mercy, grace and peace, a day of hope and salvation. Here it is enough to concentrate on the fulfillment of one major prophetic oath found in Isaiah 45. God is described as taking an oath in his own name, an oath described as absolute and irrevocable. This divine oath trumpeted that "every knee will bow before him; every tongue will swear [confess] that in the LORD [Jehovah] alone are righteousness and strength."

Fulfilment of this prophetic oath may be more process than event. Jesus prayed that his disciples "may be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you [the Father] sent me" (John 17:22-23).

From the beginning of the church until now, Christians have stubbornly criticized and judged their brothers and sisters for who they are and what they do. In Romans 14, the prophetic oath is used to challenge this damaging habit of the church. The Scripture asks pointedly, "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God' " (Romans 14:10-11).

An ancient confession invoked for the church the attitude with which Christ Jesus came to earth to incarnate God's love, both by the life he lived and by the death he died. Here the oath is worldwide in scope and applicability. Simply said, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11). This universal obeisance will be obtained neither by torture nor compelled by law but by love and grace.

I submit these thoughts, not because my doubts are gone but to testify to what comforts me. Surely, the universally violated law stands firm. Happily, my disturbed mind is eased because it appears to me that the oath of the God of love defeats the law, frustrates hell and overwhelms universal need. The single-minded purpose of God is embedded in the name of Jesus which is "Jehovah is Salvation." Amen.

Martin W. Lehman is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

Bodydouble

On being 'little Christs'

by Jonathan P. Larson

In the entertainment world—film, TV and video—and sometimes in high-stakes security services, there is an interesting device used to replicate the presence and image of a high-profile person with what is called a body double. Tom Cruise, Sandra Bullock and some political leaders, for example, are known to have used such body doubles in the course of their work.

A body double substitutes for the celebrity when he or she must be elsewhere or is unavailable. Those who specialize in this device have learned how to recreate the presence and effect of the star by replicating so faithfully the details of appearance, gesture and demeanor that even a trained eye cannot detect any difference. In fact, much of what we may see of a star in a film is actually a body double standing in for the headliner.

This concept from the secular world is worth pondering as a figure for understanding ourselves as Christians or, even more compellingly, for understanding the church.

The headliner of this faith movement—the Jesus movement—is no longer physically present as the full story unfolds. But there is ample reference in the New Testament to Jesus' ongoing presence and role in the story in the form of "Christ's body," the community of faith learners, who "grow up into the full stature of Christ" and are a kind of body double for the central, transforming figure of the drama. As individuals, but even more intensely together, we reflect the traits, the purpose, the manner of the one whose body double we are.

> As individuals, but even more intensely together, we reflect the traits, the purpose, the manner of the one whose body double we are.

In 2003, when speaking to North American Mennonites gathered in Atlanta, Jimmy Carter opened his address by reminding the assembly that the label "Christian" could be taken to mean "little Christ" or, to put it another way, that our presence and calling in the world as followers of Jesus is somehow to be mistaken for him, to be his "body double."

Hollywood special effects may not be the highest moral aspiration for the Jesus people of our time, but being a body double for Jesus definitely is. Indeed, it is the only authentic plan for the renewal of the Christian movement in our or any time.

Jonathan P. Larson lives in Atlanta.

How to manage the darkness

Losing our **wattage**

by Gloria J. Wallace

What is going to happen to me in here? I stood in the dark, closet-like space that was the church confessional. I was 8 years old, and it was my first time. "Hello?" I whispered into the darkness, but no one answered. Fear made my palms moist, and my hands squeezed each other. I tried to adjust my eyes to the darkness, focusing hard into the blackness, hoping to see a person, wall or even a ceiling. But nothing.

"Hello," I said again, a little louder this time. I was a child and didn't know what to do. Just as my knobby knees started to tremble, a ray of light appeared. There was the kneeler before me, and the priest's voice penetrated the quiet. Later I learned my terror was caused by a burned-out light bulb in the confessional.

Nearing age 50, I wonder what I've learned since that day in the confessional. The first answer is: I am still learning. But second and more important: There is always a burned-out light bulb situation that needs to be overcome.

Just last year my daughter joined the marching band at her high school, and this automatically launched me into a new role of "band parent." Even the worst of TV sitcoms in which parents behave badly could not have prepared me for this experience. Our group ran the concession stand at the school's football games.

For the entire season I worked next to a woman who refused to say hello to me or even make eye contact. Another mother told me a few of the ladies were concerned I was befriending the "wrong people" in the group. A righteous anger rose within me, and I kept thinking how Jesus never excluded anyone and wouldn't want me to either.

So I continued sitting with those parents who were kind

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and accepting of me, yet at the same time I tried to offer a peace branch to the others who were growling from the sidelines. I focused on remaining true to myself and the convictions God has instilled in me through his Word.

When the school year ended, the good news was that I had made new friends. And the woman who avoided me most? She invited me and my family to a picnic at her home that summer. No one was happier than me to sit under her sun umbrella, talking and munching on chips and salad.

God blessed my simple efforts of reaching out and being a friend to the other parents. But what about the more complicated problems of life—failing health, losing one's job or the death of a loved one? Sometimes circumstances arise in which we have no control and we need to remember God's promise that he will never leave us. The best we can do is take each day as it comes, pray and rely on the strength the Lord provides.

My pastor often says, "God cares about the big and the little things that concern us." So whether large or small, if we are concerned, he is concerned.

"We need a lot of help," the homeless woman said to me. This happened when I was volunteering at an evacuation center. Our town went through an emergency when the nearby river threatened to flood homes, businesses and even the local women's shelter. All the ladies from the shelter were corralled to one long table—their belongings in overstuffed garbage bags at their feet.

What better way to love Jesus in return than to help someone else whose light bulb is in need of repair?

Months later, I still hear that voice asking for help, drawing me out of my self-centered, most-of-the-time-in-control way of life and calling me to just plain share myself with others who are lonely or suffering. Jesus loves us so much, what better way to love him in return than to help someone else whose light bulb is in need of repair?

I suppose the wisdom of an 8-year-old in a dark confessional shows us we should hold fast and not bolt at the least bit of discomfort that befalls us. What lessons we learn and how our lives are made rich when we work through our discomforts, one burned-out light bulb at a time!

Gloria Wallace lives in northeastern Pennsylvania and is the creator of Lipshine, an online devotional ministry: www.lipshinedevotion.com.

Up to $300 … anyone?

Keith Harder serves as director of The Corinthian Plan for the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

The Corinthian Plan is doing well. It continues to provide health coverage and other benefits for more than 1,000 people who are involved in serving God in Mennonite Church USA congregations and conferences. This includes nearly 60 congregations that are receiving assistance for the cost of health coverage, ensuring that some pastors and their families who were previously without health coverage now have it. This was one of the reasons delegates called for Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board to develop a health plan for pastors at the 2007 Delegate Assembly in San José, Calif., and we celebrate the mutual care the plan has made possible since its launch in January 2010.

However, one feature of The Corinthian Plan is underutilized: its emphasis on wellness and health. Resources and incentives promoting healthy lifestyles and good stewardship of health care are available to participants in the plan. Each family may receive up to $300 per year for filling out an online health profile and meeting certain minimum criteria. Wellness tips and personal coaching also are available to help participants meet their wellness goals and reduce health-care costs.

> We want to be a health plan, not a plan that only pays the cost of health care.

To date, the response to this incentive has been disappointing. In the first two years, fewer than 20 percent of participants completed the health assessment and received the cash incentive. Why the poor response? Is it lack of awareness that it is available? Is the process too difficult? Do the resources just tell us what we already know? Are pastors not concerned about wellness in general and their own in particular? Is the $300 incentive too small to attract attention?

Wellness is being emphasized in many organizations and workplaces these days. It sometimes seems we are bombarded with information and messages urging us to make changes in what we eat or how much we exercise. We are told that if we can make even minor lifestyle changes, we will be able to improve our quality of life and reduce spending on health care. Employers are providing a variety of incentives and penalties to encourage employees to do so.

The lack of participation in the wellness features of The Corinthian Plan raises broader questions about what motivates us to change or to act on what we already know. What would motivate pastors to embrace the wellness emphasis and incentives available to them through The Corinthian Plan if they have not already done so?

We all make changes from time to time. What motivated us and got us to move in a new direction or to embrace a new commitment? Was it a new insight, knowledge, pain or the example and testimony of others?

Several respondents who did fill out the wellness profile reported that it served as a wake-up call and helped motivate them to make needed changes.

The Christian gospel calls us to embrace and expect change. Choosing to follow Jesus involves major lifestyle changes. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul says we are being changed into the likeness of Christ. Revelation 21 says we should anticipate a new heaven and new earth.

The gospel also calls us to hold each other accountable to our commitments. But when do our efforts to change ourselves and others become willful and counterproductive?

What is the role of leaders in motivating and encouraging change? In his best-selling book *Leading Change*, John Kotter says leaders have an important role in encouraging change in the organizations they lead. At the same time, leaders can arouse and reinforce resistance to change when they ignore or misinterpret resistance. At times people may be resisting those trying to change them as much as the change itself.

Those of us involved in the administration of The Corinthian Plan are concerned about the health of those who are covered by the plan as well as the health of the plan. We want to be a health plan, not a plan that only pays the cost of health care.

What about the lifestyle changes—exercise, diet, work habits, relationship patterns—that would improve the quality of our lives? How do we overcome our own resistance to change, even change that we know in our heads will make us healthier and more productive? Send me your ideas at keithh@mennoniteusa.org.

Purposeful Plan needs an eighth priority

Berry Friesen is a member of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

At last July's Pittsburgh convention, Mennonite Church USA delegates began considering a blueprint for our church. "A Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan for Mennonite Church USA" includes nearly 12,000 words but articulates a clear and concise purpose: "develop and nurture missional Mennonite congregations of many cultures." Unfortunately, it's incomplete.

The document asks us to "pay attention to seven priorities within the life of our church over the next decade. As we attend to these priorities," it goes on to say, "the Spirit will enable us to align our work with God's purposes so that we may become an effective sign, instrument and foretaste of God's kingdom." These priorities are Christian formation, Christian community, holistic witness, stewardship, leadership development, intercultural transformation and church-to-church relationships.

But something important is missing: a call to include within our witness a clear dissent from the warring militarism, capitalistic greed and arrogant individualism of our nominally Christian culture.

The number seven holds significance for us as a community; adding an eighth priority may not be a popular suggestion. Nevertheless, the point must be made: Within the society in which we live, the Christian message has been largely domesticated to accommodate the powers that be. The stated priorities, while all important, do not ask us to stand apart from this fusion of the gospel with America's story.

The document acknowledges that the "war against terrorism" has been long and expensive and has produced "a deep anxiety and a fear of 'the other,' with particular focus on Muslims and Middle Eastern people." It recognizes that "a worldwide recession has brought the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression." It identifies a "growing intolerance for immigrant peoples" in our nation, the "dramatic shift in weather patterns" we are experiencing and the way political parties use hot-button issues to divide us.

How have we as a church responded to these aspects of our context? Remarkably, the document confesses that we have not been able to withstand the divisiveness of partisan politics. "Even though we read the same Scriptures as members of the same church, we often interpret and apply the Scriptures differently in response to social issues. Pastors often feel torn, not knowing how to best respond to the vocal and aggressive discourse that can develop in their congregations regarding issues being debated in the media, especially around election time."

While I appreciate the candor of this confession, it leaves me with questions. What in the proposed priorities will produce a better result in the future? Might the practices described in those priorities lack the power to communicate the kingdom of God unless we first deliberately end their servitude to the view that whatever else may happen, the American way must endure?

Whether we are conservative or liberal, rural or urban, Republican or Democrat, we can agree that three assumptions are at the core of prevailing American thought: (1) U.S. military domination of the world is better than all available alternatives, (2) catering to the corporate elite is necessary in order for the rest of us to get by and (3) personal freedom and fulfillment is achieved by throwing off restraints and limitations.

The Christian message has been largely domesticated to accommodate the powers that be.

To unleash the power of the seven recommended practices, we need to disassociate ourselves from these three deceptions. As a church, this will mean renouncing U.S. military domination of the world and declaring that even in this life, we do not find our security in the power of empire. It will mean ending our infatuation with Wall Street, affirming workers as the source of prosperity and committing ourselves to the support of an economy that creates opportunities for working people. It will mean bearing witness to the freedom and fulfillment we have found by binding ourselves to the way of Jesus, communities of faith and relationships of love and fidelity.

In our context, these identity markers will signify the saving power of our Lord. As we publicly embrace such nonconformity, the seven priorities contained in the Purposeful Plan will indeed do their work, making of us "an effective sign, instrument and foretaste of God's kingdom."

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Now ‘Anabaptist’ instead of ‘Associated’

AMBS to change its name, redesign programs and add new faculty

Mary E. Klassen

Sara Wenger Shenk, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary president, invites the audience to say the new name.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., will continue to be “AMBS,” but a new name, redesigned programs and new faculty were announced May 4 and 5 at two celebration events.

Leading the list is a change in the seminary’s name to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, effective at the beginning of the new school year, Aug. 28.

“Associated tells the story of a previous generation when two seminaries merged into one,” Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, explained. Although “Anabaptist refers to the radical Jesus movement of the 16th century, it has reappeared with a second life in the 21st century. New Anabaptists from many Christian denominations are rediscovering Jesus’ call to radical discipleship with renewed joy and fervor,” Wenger Shenk said. “As a seminary, we are ready to collaborate with a widening circle of new and global Anabaptists as well as other kindred spirits from diverse denominations, cultures and ethnicities.”

As one signal of this renewed mission, AMBS is redesigning its Master of Divinity degree, built around the theme “Leading Communities of Shalom: Ministry in the Way of Jesus.”

Early plans are to offer two simultaneous options: a community-focused residential program and a program accessible to students at a distance. In addition, plans are for the degree to include fewer credit hours and diverse and extended internships. Through the next year the AMBS faculty will develop the details of this program and seek accreditation approvals, with the hope of launching it in the fall of 2013.

Another new program comes from AMBS’s Church Leadership Center: a series of six short, online, noncredit Anabaptist studies courses. These are designed for people who have completed seminary studies in other-than-Mennonite settings and those who wish to study Anabaptism at the graduate level but do not need credit for their studies. The first two courses will be offered in early 2013.

Wenger Shenk also reported the appointments of three new members of the AMBS faculty, all to begin this summer:

- Rachel Miller Jacobs of Goshen, Ind., assistant professor of congregational formation;
- Andy Brubacher Kaethler of Elkhart, Ind., assistant professor of faith formation and culture;
- Jamie Pitts, Glasgow, UK, assistant professor of Anabaptist studies.

These announcements came in the context of the rededication of the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount.

“The renewed chapel is a sign that more is being renewed at AMBS,” Wenger Shenk said.

For the Saturday afternoon service of rededication, Martin E. Marty made a return visit. Marty, professor emeritus of the history of modern Christianity at Chicago Divinity School, preached at the dedication service in 1965. In this service, he named nine odd things, beginning with the question of why a historian was invited to talk about something new.

The theme in Isaiah 43 of God creating something new and the question that follows, “Do you not perceive it?” led to Marty’s conclusion: “Do all you can to perceive and spread and become God’s cocreator of new things along the way.”

The expansion and renovation of the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount focused on adding an annex and upgrading the building for better energy efficiency and accessibility. The worship space, although unchanged in its shape and design, has new energy-efficient windows and new flooring, lighting, chairs and sound and electrical systems.

The annex adds an elevator, main-floor restrooms and a larger gathering space, allowing the previous narthex to serve as overflow space. The basement now has larger windows; new flooring, ceilings and lighting and additional storage space.—*Mary E. Klassen of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

Decades of conversation about persecution

Tree dedication in Elkhart, Ind., mirrors tree plantings worldwide.

A river birch tree with three trunks but one root system, standing in front of the Mennonite offices in Elkhart, Ind., became a mark of reconciliation among Lutherans and Mennonites at a dedication service on April 10.

At the service, André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness and interchurch relations for Mennonite Church USA, noted the one root system symbolizes the roots we share in God's love and grace. The three trunks remind us that "as we grow in relationship we maintain our own identity even as Christ is always present with us as a third partner."

This tree dedication mirrors tree plantings that have occurred in other locations worldwide that also signify the deepening relationships between Mennonites and Lutherans.

The ceremony was part of a daylong event that commemorated several decades of Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue. Participants in those conversations as well as in day-to-day interdenominational ministry were present, including representatives from the international dialogue, national denominational staff, regional synod and conferences, seminaries and lay ministry in the local area.

Among the guests was Kathryn Johnson, Ph.D., who was instrumental in fostering encounters between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Mennonite World Conference.

In an evening lecture, Johnson briefly noted three decades of conversations between Lutherans and Mennonites to address the historic persecution of Anabaptists by the Lutheran Church. She described the July 22, 2010, service of forgiveness and reconciliation in Stuttgart, Germany. At this gathering, leaders expected to take a vote on an action to express repentance for the persecution, a vote that normally would have involved delegates raising cards to show their affirmation.

However, Mark Hanson, the presiding bishop and president of LWF, said, "This is a holy moment. We are asking for forgiveness for something that we did in the past, but even more, for its continuing legacy that we have never addressed. This is a holy vote; we should be voting on our knees."

Johnson reflected, "At that moment, the only people sitting were Mennonites. And everyone else was kneeling or standing."

Johnson continued her presentation by sharing how "beyond our imagination this act of reconciliation has spoken to churches in ways that are far beyond addressing simply the persecutions in the 16th century. There's a resonance, there is an appeal to the Christian imagination [that] continues to surprise us."

In the discussion that followed Johnson's presentation, Nelson Kraybill, pastor of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, asked how Mennonites should tell the stories of Anabaptist martyrs in this new era of reconciliation.

Johnson recommended that the stories continue to be told, referring as an example to the story of Dirk Willems saving his pursuer from drowning and then being killed. "That's not only a story of martyrdom; that's a story of nonresistance in the face of evil," she said. "To lose that story would impoverish the whole Christian family."

Mary E. Klassen

Dr. Kathryn L. Johnson, professor of historical theology at Louisville (Ky.) Presbyterian Seminary and a participant in ecumenical dialogues between Mennonite Church USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, waters the tree planted in front of the Mennonite offices in Elkhart, Ind., by Lutherans and Mennonites at a dedication service on April 10.

Johnson emphasized that the important issue is how the martyr stories are told, reflecting discussions through the day in which Mennonite participants challenged each other to tell these stories as examples of faithfulness to Christ rather than as "what those people did to us" and to tell martyr stories of faithful Christians from other church traditions as well.—*Mary E. Klassen for Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Mennonite Church USA*

Church responds to hunger for conversations

Kansas church youth invite friends to dinner before Wednesday evening services.

Vada Snider

Junior high youth participate with voice and motion during praise singing at the beginning of worship. Youth pictured, left to right, are Dauson Pulliam, Lacy Hartson and Haley Ord.

On the edge of rural Harper, Kan., 50 to 60 youth meet each week in what has become a thriving center of community outreach. The popular gathering place, Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, is a "live" spot with plenty of good food and spirited music.

But it's more than the contemporary praise music that captures the youths' energy. And it's more than the heaping plates of homemade food that fulfills their hunger. Deeper things of heart and soul keep them coming back to PVMC, where 30 to 40 adults welcome them every Wednesday night without reservation.

Pastor Alan Stucky shares what he believes is happening: "While it's not universal, there is a clear hunger out there in the world to learn about God and the Bible and to find out how they apply to [people's] everyday lives."

Stucky came to the 110-member church three years ago with a youth ministry degree, a cultural understanding of youth and a big picture view of ministry.

"Alan has done a good job of leading us through the challenges of our outreach to youth," says Brenda Shue, a volunteer. "Most of the youth are unchurched. Being here on Wednesday night is church for them. It's been good for us to have all these youth because it has stretched us as a congregation, but stretching can be painful."

Stucky says the makeup of the congregation has changed over the years. And that's also been part of the stretching process. The church was founded in 1888 by a group of 11 people in the "Old Mennonite" vein. Like many Mennonite congregations, the church was dominated by family groups. But that's no longer so.

"Now, only about half our members grew up Mennonite," says Stucky. "We've had to rearticulate what it means to be Mennonite in our community. We've had to expand our vision.

"Past pastors started pushing to connect more with the community," Stucky says, "and we've had outreach to the youth for a long time. We are plugged into the cutting edge of youth ministry. Growing pains make new trails, and there is no rule book for this. We just continually ask, Where is God leading us?"

Five years ago, the number of youth participating in Wednesday night services was about a sixth its current size. High schoolers were having trouble getting to church after their sports practices, so they asked the congregation to provide supper on Wednesday nights. The junior highers smelled a good thing and asked if they could eat supper, too.

Ryan Masenthin and Brice Patterson were in the seventh and eight grades back then, and they invited everyone at school to come to supper at PVMC.

"We made a big deal out of it," says Masenthin, now a high school senior. "We kept inviting people every week. We didn't let up."

Youth who had never associated with each other at school became friends at church. New connections were made. Relationships grew.

Following supper and worship during a Wednesday night gathering in April, some senior high youth shared about how important relationships are and that they like being able to come and be open to God with each other.

"You can know these people and talk to them, and there's no judgment," agree the teens.

The youth say they appreciate that the adults of this congregation relate to them throughout the week.

"I like that it's not just a relationship at church," says Austin Tompkinson, who recently chose to be baptized at PVMC.

Fostering real and genuine relationships between adults and kids will continue to be key to the congregation's outreach, says Pastor Stucky.

"My goal is to help youth take one more step forward on their journey toward God," he says. "For some, that will mean getting baptized. For others, learning how to find a verse in the Bible. And for others, simply knowing that God loves them and that other people do, too."

"The Holy Spirit has definitely been leading us through all of this," he adds. "When we've been pushed to another door, people have said, 'We don't know where this is going, but if the Spirit is leading, we're going to follow.' "—*Cindy Snider*

From student to supervisor

Julianna once sat in Dintaman's class. Now she's his boss.

Steve Dintaman remembers Julianna Kokšarova as an eager student who soaked up everything and asked intelligent questions.

"As I got to know her, she just radiated joy in life and a deep faith in Christ," he says.

Dintaman, a longtime mission worker supported by Mennonite Mission Network and Virginia Mennonite Missions, met Kokšarova when she took a class of his in her third year at Lithuania Christian College in Klaipeda. Now, after completing a master's degree and a doctorate, Kokšarova is back at LCC (now called LCC International University), this time as the senior development officer—and, because Dintaman works part-time for LCC's development office, she's also his boss.

Kokšarova wasn't a Christian when she came to LCC as an undergrad; she simply liked the college and its strong academic reputation.

"I was raised in an environment where people didn't believe each other," says Kokšarova. "They didn't trust each other. North American missionaries started coming in 1991, and we were told, 'Those people are really bad people. They will hypnotize you and take your money.' We had a sarcastic attitude toward Christians."

She brought that attitude with her to LCC, but the longer she stayed, the more she realized that something was different.

"All the professors were truly nice; even though I didn't believe anyone or trust anyone, I gradually started trusting them," she says. "They were not only saying the right things but practicing the right things. They were truly spreading the gospel and, if necessary, they used words."

One of Kokšarova's roommates was a Christian and, after a discussion about faith, gave Kokšarova a Bible. She promptly put it in a box and forgot about it, even as she was continually drawn to listen in on worship services from her place in the library, despite the fact that she thought the worship services were silly.

"Only the outcasts went to worship," Kokšarova says.

Because she was from Latvia and thus an international student, Kokšarova was forced to return to LCC early for her second year. She had to deal with insurance, visa issues and was only able to access one box of her belongings that had been stored in the dorm basement. Upon opening the box, Julianna found the Bible her roommate had given her the previous year. She felt as though her life was in turmoil at that time and decided to read the Bible, hoping to find some wisdom in it.

"That was the beginning of my new life," says Kokšarova. "The first thing I read were the verses about love in 1 Corinthians 13, and I realized that my whole life was wrong. I was successful but I was not a good person. Reading those verses, something changed in my heart."

Photo provided

Julianna Kokšarova and Steve Dintaman.

Kokšarova says she spent a good part of the week crying but by the end of the week realized that God still loved her.

"Christ forgave me and cleansed me," she says. "So what next?" For her, the next step was attending worship. After that, an Alpha course and two required LCC classes—Old Testament and New Testament—helped round out her biblical education.

"My heart was empty and it started filling up," she says. "I became a happy person that year. I opened up my heart, learned to smile and laugh and joke."

Kokšarova started volunteering, too. She found there were people around her who were passionate about serving, but she wanted to know more about running a nonprofit. Her quest led her to the University of Georgia (Athens, Ga.) for a master's degree, then to the prestigious philanthropy program at Purdue University (Indianapolis) for a doctorate. She was doing doctoral research in Europe when she received an email from LCC offering her a job in their development office.

"I wasn't looking for a job at LCC, but I realized I was needed," she says. "The position was important for the university, I had the skills and God was preparing me for this."

For Dintaman, it's also rewarding to see one of his students up close in a leadership role.

"It's gratifying to see someone I knew as a young person become a peer and a leader that I work for," he says. She is not simply a professional filling a slot—she is a product of LCC and a passionate believer in it."—*Melanie Hess of Mennonite Mission Network*

Retirement communities to feel more like home

At least three offer household models similar to The Green House.

Mennonite retirement homes are starting to take a more community-based approach to make their facilities feel like home.

For Mennonite Home Communities of (Bluffton) Ohio (MHCO) and Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community (VMRC), Harrisonburg, Va., this means implementing The Green House model. In this model, six to 10 residents live together in a house designed for each to have their own bedroom and bath. Residents have easy access to a living room, kitchen, dining area and garden. While they receive licensed nursing care, residents are not restricted to a tight schedule.

"It is not an institution, it is a home," says Doug Luginbill, the director of resource development at MHCO.

Two homes located on the new Willow Ridge campus of MHCO are scheduled to open in November.

Luginbill says he believes that The Green House Project fits well with the philosophy of MHCO and says all their nursing care may eventually be provided using this model.

VMRC has plans for up to 10 Green House homes in its new Woodland Park neighborhood, where three houses will be completed in December. "Feedback from VMRC residents and family members indicated that traditional nursing home environments were not places elders looked forward to living," says Ronald Yoder, president and CEO, as quoted in an article by Maureen Pearson.

In the same light, an article about Garden Spot Village, New Holland, Pa., in the spring edition of *Destination* says that "a hospital might be a nice place to visit when you're sick, but who would want to live there?"

The retirement community in 2009 acquired Maple Farm—previously owned and operated by Lancaster General Hospital. Maple Farm will implement a similar household model to that of Green House. Households have been in place at Garden Spot for five years. The first household is now occupied, and a second will be completed this winter.

Garden Spot Village also plans to develop 44 urban lofts

- Mennonite Home Communities, Lancaster, Pa., is currently working on the second phase of their Rubia Place Villa Expansion at their Woodcrest Villa Residential Campus.

- Meadows at Mercy Creek, a 60-unit assisted living facility owned by Meadows Mennonite Retirement community, will open in Normal, Ill., in September.

- In Glendale, Ariz., Glencroft will complete construction on Sarah's Place, a memory care/assisted living community, in late spring. They also anticipate the opening of Colter Commons, which will provide government-subsidized rent for those who meet HUD eligibility.

- Greencroft Goshen (Ind.) is in the design and fund-raising stages for a new 64-bed neighborhood model health-care center.

- Kidron Bethel Village, North Newton, Kan., has completed or committed six townhomes and one single home of their Campus Woods Estates. This 14-acre development will eventually include 21 townhomes and two single homes.

- Woods Edge will provide 55 new households, ranging in size from 1,408 to more than 1,890 square feet, to Tel Hai Retirement Community in Honey Brook, Pa.

- Willow Valley Retirement Communities, Willow Street, Pa., plans to add 42 villas and 64 apartments in the form of 25-acre Providence Park.—*Serena Townsend*

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Fred Steiner

From left: two residents of Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio, a bank representative and MHCO board president plant a tulip bulb at the ground blessing ceremony on Oct. 14, 2011.

for seniors 55 and over in The Lancaster (Pa.) Press Building. Originally built in 1907 as a cigar factory, the building was bought by Lancaster Press for the publication of medical journals but has been sitting unused for over 20 years.

"We took what was existing here and made the best use of it," says Logan Patterson, liaison for The Lancaster Press Building.

Once deposits have been made on 33 of the apartments, construction will commence on all 44 lofts and should be completed within a year. Ideas for the first floor include an upscale restaurant, retail space and continuing education.

Another former cigar factory in Lancaster will also be given new purpose. In June, Landis Communities, Lititz, Pa., in partnership with Zamagias Properties, plans to begin construction on Steeple View Lofts. This urban-living option includes 36 rental apartments for adults 55 and over, says Larry Guengerich, director of communications and church relations for Landis Communities. Possible tenants for the first floor include Landis at Home, a pastry style café, an art gallery or other businesses that would appeal to both Steeple View Loft residents and the broader community.

Over many years the building was a flour and feed warehouse, cigar factory, umbrella-handle factory, padlock factory and gold- and silver-plating business.

"This building is in great shape and is sitting empty," says Guengerich. "By bringing it back into use and creating a community in the building, we are not only providing an option for those over 55 but are helping keep downtown Lancaster a growing and vital place."—*Serena Townsend, intern for* The Mennonite *during this spring semester*

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Mennonite schools hold commencements

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Bethel College yet to come

Bluffton

Katie Muhlenkamp of Coldwater, Ohio, receives her diploma and congratulations from Bluffton University president James M. Harder on May 6.

Bluffton (Ohio) University
310 graduates, May 6

Bluffton University graduates were urged at their May 6 commencement to give of themselves as others—from family to Bluffton faculty—have given to them.

The gift of self is the greatest gift, said Karel Oxley, superintendent of Lima City Schools, in her commencement address. The 310 graduates were the second most among the 112 graduating classes in Bluffton history. The 209 undergraduate students who received diplomas represented the largest such number ever at Bluffton.

"I believe the gift of self leads to a spirit of servant leadership," said Oxley, who also received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the university during the ceremony. "It is servant leadership that will continue to carry forth the ideals of this great institution forever."

She noted what she called her "mantra" as a school superintendent: "You never quite know the moment when you may change a child's life forever."

"So, too," she said, "all the people here for you today—faculty, family and friends—have invested in their giving of self to you in hopes that along your journey from childhood to adulthood there may have been a moment that has changed your life forever."

The gift of self "has been abundantly bestowed on you," she reminded the graduates. "Go forth and serve the world with the greatest gift of all." Oxley is retiring this summer after nine years as superintendent in Lima and 40 years in education overall. In addition to her leadership in education—which also includes the 2011-12 presidency of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators—she has been active in the Lima community, serving on the boards of several organizations.

Also at the 112th annual commencement ceremony, Bluffton president James M. Harder announced the granting of faculty emeritus status to Kay Soltesz, a retiring professor of dietetics. A registered and licensed dietitian, Soltesz has been at Bluffton since 1995.—*Bluffton University*

Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg
15 graduates, April 28

On April 28, 15 students received master's degrees from Eastern Mennonite Seminary. Eleven received Master of Divinity degrees, one received a Master of Arts in religion degree, and three received Master of Arts in church leadership degrees. Six students received certificates in ministry studies, and two received graduate certificates in theology for peacebuilding.

As the commencement speaker, Daniel Garrett, an adjunct professor who teaches United Methodist studies, urged graduates to locate themselves in "the power and wisdom of God" and to embrace "a holy calling in what the world still sees as weakness and foolishness."

Lindsey Kolb

Fifteen students who received master's degrees during Eastern Mennonite Seminary's commencement service on April 28

Jon Styer

Abigail Disney, who coproduced *Pray the Devil Back to Hell,* addressed the Eastern Mennonite University graduates on April 29.

Garrett traced his journey as a minister to familial influences. His grandfather challenged him "to try to put everything that I was about to learn into the service of that truth [of the gospel]," said Garrett.

Then he spoke of how his father tried to incorporate the newest technology of the time, a cassette tape player, into his ministry practice, upon the advice of his son.

"My father, in his 30th year of ordained ministry and already a wonderful preacher, got a tape recorder, put it on the pulpit one Sunday and recorded his sermon."

After dinner that night, his father tried to listen to the tape but a few minutes later fell fast asleep. Garrett joked that his father may have been the first preacher to be put to sleep by his own sermon.

"Who can predict what technologies will make ministry possible in new ways in the future?" said Garrett. "I would suggest that you will need some guiding focus for what the church is about—to keep those technologies instrumental to the church's purposes."—*Laura Lehman Amstutz*

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg
426 graduates, April 29

During EMU's 94th commencement, president Loren Swartzendruber conferred 426 degrees and certificates: 306 undergraduate, 97 graduate degrees, 11 certificates in pastoral ministry studies, 10 graduate certificates in conflict transformation and two graduate certificates in peacebuilding and conflict transformation in educational settings.

Some of the administrators, faculty and students wore bailing twine pinned to their robes in remembrance of farm-raised Theodore (Theo) Brian Yoder, who would have been among these graduates if he had not died at age 22 on April 12, after a 12-year battle with various cancers.

Commencement speaker Abigail Disney asked the graduates to support a greater role for women in the political arena, particularly in peace negotiations. If more women were at the negotiating tables, suggested Disney, wars would likely end sooner and on terms that permit faster healing.

"Women, in critical mass, in places where decisions are made, reduce the value of force and masculinity as political and social currency," Disney said. "By introducing alternative modes of problem solving, … they make spaces hospitable not only to other women but to all kinds of men."

Disney, who coproduced *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (Fork Films, 2008), offered her support to the values of social service and peace that EMU teaches: "I feel I've spent years trying to teach my sons about charity and mercy and patience. More often than not, I feel like I'm forced to teach them these things against everything they see, in politics, popular culture, in school, in the public discourse and even in certain aspects of the religious sphere."—*Mike Zucconi*

Goshen (Ind.) College
234 graduates, April 22

Goshen College's class of 2012 received degrees on April 22 after being encouraged to become "ambassadors of reconciliation" and to experience the healing and fulfillment possible through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The class of 2012 consisted of 234 graduates who were awarded the following degrees: 146 Bachelor of Arts, 43 Bachelor of Science in Nursing, 22 Bachelor of Science, 13 Master of Science as family nurse practitioners and 10 Master of Arts in Environmental Education.

The commencement speaker was Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward, the Bishop of Coventry, England, from 1985 to 1997.

Barrington-Ward, who has been a regular speaker for Goshen College's Arts in London May term course, received a bachelor's and master's degree from Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, where he later served as chaplain and dean. He served as Bishop of Coventry from 1985 to 1997 and currently is a bishop with pastoral care of the University of Cambridge. In 2001, he was appointed Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George by Queen Elizabeth.

In his commencement address, "Becoming What You Are: Exploring the Great Exchange," Barrington-Ward talked about two personal discoveries—God's meaning in the person of Jesus Christ and a simple prayer from the earliest days of Christianity. He called the interplay between the discoveries as two parts of an "exchange"

(continued on page 40)

Mennonite schools (continued)

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Bethel College yet to come

Alysha Landis

Goshen College senior Mayra Salamanca (right) stands with junior Lizzy Diaz after Goshen College's 114th annual commencement on April 22.

(continued from page 39)

between God and humanity arrived at through Jesus Christ.

When he was a young man teaching in Germany, Barrington-Ward said he was moved by a sermon in which the pastor described the "sweet exchange" of God becoming human in the person of Jesus Christ, accepting the depths of humanity and offering the hope of a final transformation as a new creation.

Represented in this year's graduating class were students from 25 states, including 115 from Indiana, and from 11 countries.

The academic program with the largest number of graduating students was nursing, which held its traditional pinning ceremony the day before commencement to recognize the 20 individuals who completed the traditional, four-year program. In addition, 23 individuals were granted degrees through the Bachelor of Science in nursing degree completion program, and 13 individuals got Master of Science in nursing degrees.—*Richard R. Aguirre*

Hesston (Kan.) College
167 graduates, May 6

Hesston College's 167 graduates of the Class of 2012 were encouraged to get back to the basics of life and faith during a May 6 commencement ceremony.

Joe Manickam, a 1987 Hesston College graduate and director for Asia programs with Mennonite Central Committee, presented the commencement address "Back to Basics," based on the college's 2011-12 theme verse from Micah 6:8. Manickam served as associate director of admissions at Hesston from 1991 to 1996 and as associate director at the Center for Anabaptist Leadership in Pasadena, Calif., from 1996 to 2005. He lives in Lancaster, Pa., with his wife, Wanda, and children Faith and Matthew.

Manickam encouraged graduates to remember that genuine relationships with the people they encounter throughout life can serve as lessons in community, justice, mercy and humility.

"Rules serve as the glue that bonds communities together, but sometimes the rules we surround ourselves with get in the way of being in relationship with others, and Micah is telling us to get back to the basics," said Manickam.

"There will be times when God is going to place in front of you things that scare you, things you don't understand, but if what Micah is teaching is relevant today, you must step into that situation, because if there is something more important than Christian rituals, it's relationships," said Manickam.

Graduates Hannah Bachman of Tiskilwa, Ill., and Zachary Baumgartner of Hesston, Kan., were nominated by their classmates to give the student address during commencement.—*Hesston College*

Compilation by Anna Groff

Larry Bartel

Hesston College graduates Aaron Jones (Kansas City, Mo.) and Saki Nozaki (Tokyo, Japan) pose for a picture following commencement on May 6.

Good news for *The Mennonite*

Magazine ends fiscal year with small margin; board addresses moratorium.

The Mennonite, Inc.: Board members for *The Mennonite* met on April 13 in Goshen, Ind. From left: Sheri Wenger, Lancaster, Pa.; Barth Hague, secretary-treasurer, Newton, Kan.; Jason Moyer, Iowa City, Iowa; Susan Sommer, chair, Tremont, Ill.; Sarah Burkhalter, Seattle; Gerald Mast, vice chair, Bluffton, Ohio; Steve Edwards, Goshen, Ind.; Shé Hall, Hampton, Va. The April 13 meeting was the first to have all director positions filled and perfect attendance by board and staff.

The board of directors for The Mennonite, Inc., met at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., on April 13 and held a joint meeting with the Executive Board during one session.

Both boards use a modified form of policy governance in their operating philosophy. Everett Thomas, editor, asked for a joint task force to develop a policy that would guide the relationship between the two boards. Such a task force would also address succession planning for the editor role.

In a separate session later, the Executive Board approved the formation of such a task force with two members from each board and a staff member from each organization.

The board for *The Mennonite* also learned that it ended its fiscal year on Jan. 31 with a small margin.

Craig Yahne, an independent auditor who examined the operation's books, reported a profit of "a penny less than $1,300."

Thomas had told the board at its October 2011 meeting he expected to end the fiscal year with a small deficit.

"I was surprised," Thomas said on April 16. "During our last fiscal year we had some extraordinary expenses. These included all the costs for moving the Goshen office to the new offices in Elkhart, and we walked away from more than $6,000 in leasehold improvements to the Goshen office. In addition, we had the expenses of sending four staff members to cover the 2011 convention in Pittsburgh."

As in each past meeting, the board discussed the magazine's moratorium on letters to the editor and articles that address Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality.

While the decision to maintain the 12-year-old moratorium is the responsibility of the editor, Thomas asks for counsel at each board meeting. In previous discussions, the board was unable to reach a consensus on what counsel to provide.

However, as a result of the most recent discussion, Thomas will develop a new policy for content that broadens the criteria to include letters and articles that help Mennonite Church USA in its discussion of any controversial matter. That policy will be tested with the board at its fall meeting.

The April 13 meeting was the first meeting of the board in which all eight board positions were filled, leading to perfect attendance for both board and staff members.

Shé Hall, Hampton Va., joined the board as the second of two co-opted members, a status provided by the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA. Three other board members are elected by the Delegate Assembly, and three are appointed by the Executive Board.—The Mennonite *staff*

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Resolutions to confront differences in WDC

Western District churches ask to remove or suspend Harader's credentials.

Western District Conference churches have submitted two resolutions to WDC for its annual assembly July 6-8 in Oklahoma City.

Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan., has presented a motion that "the leadership commission reverse [its] decision in which they stated, 'We find Joanna Harader's credentials to be in order' and *remove* [or] *suspend* the credentials of Joanna Harader."

The other resolution comes from four churches in Oklahoma and moves that "the leadership of Western District Conference, including the executive board, the commissions, committees and district ministers, acknowledge as official position the current *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*."

It goes on to say that "those who cannot do so according to their conscience resign their positions of leadership and influence in the Western District Conference."

Both resolutions came in letters to WDC conference minister Clarence Rempel, who later sent them to WDC member congregations for discussion before the assembly.

The resolutions come in the wake of last year's assembly, when WDC delegates upheld the moderator's ruling that a motion to overturn the leadership commission's decision was out of order because a 2009 policy requires that resolutions on important issues be presented in time for congregations to process them first. (See *The Mennonite*, September 2011, page 6.)

The letters include rationale for the resolutions. Bethel Mennonite's letter states that on Sept. 18, 2010, Joanna Harader, who is pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan., performed a same-sex covenant ceremony (Kansas does not recognize same-sex marriages).

Bethel's letter points out that this action went against the 2001 Membership Guidelines for Mennonite Church USA, which state that "pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony."

The letter further states that "the leadership commission did not give enough consideration to the views and beliefs of the majority of the churches in the WDC, nor the stated policies of the WDC and MC USA."

The letter from the Oklahoma churches makes the following rationale for its resolution:

"• There is a crisis within the WDC over the positions of belief and practice which threatens to split the conference apart.

"• This crisis is fostered by the difference in understanding regarding the authority and interpretation of Scripture.

"• The current direction of the WDC has resulted in a lack of unity which is disruptive to the mission of the church and is leading to a number of district churches to consider leaving the district."

The four Oklahoma churches who sent the letter are Bethel Mennonite in Hydro, Eden Mennonite in Inola, Herold Mennonite in Bessie and Metro Mennonite in Oklahoma City.—*Gordon Houser*

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Allegheny Conference leaders suggest reconciliation

Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church has been under discipline since 2005.

On March 31, Allegheny Mennonite Conference moderator John Bender shared the AMC Leadership Council's recommendation that the conference and Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church explore reconciliation. However, the exact steps for such exploration have not been spelled out.

"We don't yet know what that will look like," Donna Mast, AMC conference minister, said on May 9. "Neither do we know the process that will lead us there. But we believe God is calling us to the work of reconciliation. Initially, it was the delegates who voted to discipline Hyattsville Mennonite Church, so I imagine it will be the delegates who will need to decide to release Hyattsville from discipline, but honestly, we don't yet know."

The next AMC delegate session will be held Aug. 3-5 at the Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mount Pleasant, Pa.

Hyattsville has been under discipline from AMC since November 2005. The discipline centers around Hyattsville's membership guidelines, which embrace members in monogamous, same-sex relationships.

The March 31 recommendation from AMC conference leaders sparked the interest of National Public Radio reporter Natalie Jones, who broadcast a report on NPR on May 2. Jones interviewed Mast for the broadcast.

"As I understand biblical discipline," Jones quoted Mast as saying, "it's used for the purpose of bringing people back together again eventually, and this has been seven years that we've been working with Hyattsville under this discipline. It just seems right to the leadership council that it's time that we look at reconciliation."

Mast was the co-pastor of Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church at the time the conference voted to discipline HMC by prohibiting its right to vote or for its members to hold elected office in the conference or in Mennonite Church USA delegate assemblies. But HMC continues to send delegates to conference meetings and contribute to the conference budget.

"We're not looking to come to a place of total agreement," Mast told NPR. "What we're looking for is, Is it possible for us to work together and to remain together in fellowship, even though we disagree on this issue?"—*Everett J. Thomas*

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Mennonite Church USA

200 years since the War of 1812

Longhurst: Commemoration brings mixed emotions for Canadian Mennonites.

What makes Canada different from the United States? In surveys, Canadians routinely mention free and universal health care, multiculturalism and our love of hockey. Other things that come up include Canada's strict gun control laws, tolerance and our proud record as an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world.

But more than anything, Canadians—including Canadian Mennonites—define ourselves by what we are not: Americans. And the reason we are not Americans is due to a long-forgotten war that started 200 years ago.

Called the War of 1812, the conflict between our two nations actually lasted about three years. It began on June 19 of that year, when the United States declared war on Great Britain. Reasons for the war included British trade restrictions against the United States, the impressments of American citizens into the Royal Navy, British support for Aboriginal people fighting against Americans in the west, and a desire by some American politicians to annex Canada.

As wars go, it was pretty small stuff—for the British, it was a sideshow to its larger conflict with France. In total, about 20,000 were killed or wounded, with most casualties the result of disease. Most of the fighting occurred in a small geographic area near the Great Lakes.

As with most wars, religion played a role in the War of 1812, too.

In his book *The Churches Militant: The War of 1812 and American Religion*, American historian William Gribbin noted that many preachers welcomed the coming of the war, urging their members to take up arms against Great Britain.

More than anything, Canadians—including Canadian Mennonites—define ourselves by what we are not: Americans. And the reason we are not Americans is due to a long-forgotten war that started 200 years ago.

"The Lord will plead our cause and execute judgment for us," said one. "He will plead our cause in the highway of nations, on the banks of the Wabash and before the walls of Quebec."

"Such a war God considers as his own cause, and to help in such a cause is to come to the help of the Lord," said another.

For one preacher, battling the British was almost as important as being a minister. Participation in the war, he said, "was second only to preaching the gospel."

According to Gribbin, the war also played an important role in linking church and state in the United States.

"The heat and pressure of war fused religious sanction to national success," he wrote, adding that the war fueled a "vision of the United States as a chosen nation with a special destiny to establish a secularized version of God's kingdom on earth."

There's less evidence of religious support for the war in Canada, although Anglican Bishop John Strachan played a notable role in the conflict. Described by Pierre Berton in his book *The Invasion of Canada* "as perhaps the most significant and influential Canadian of his time," Strachan used his pulpit and position to promote patriotism and support for the troops.

When the war was officially ended in December 1814 by the Treaty of Ghent, both sides claimed victory: the Americans for standing up to Great Britain and breaking the British blockade and the Canadians for successfully repelling successive American invasion attempts.

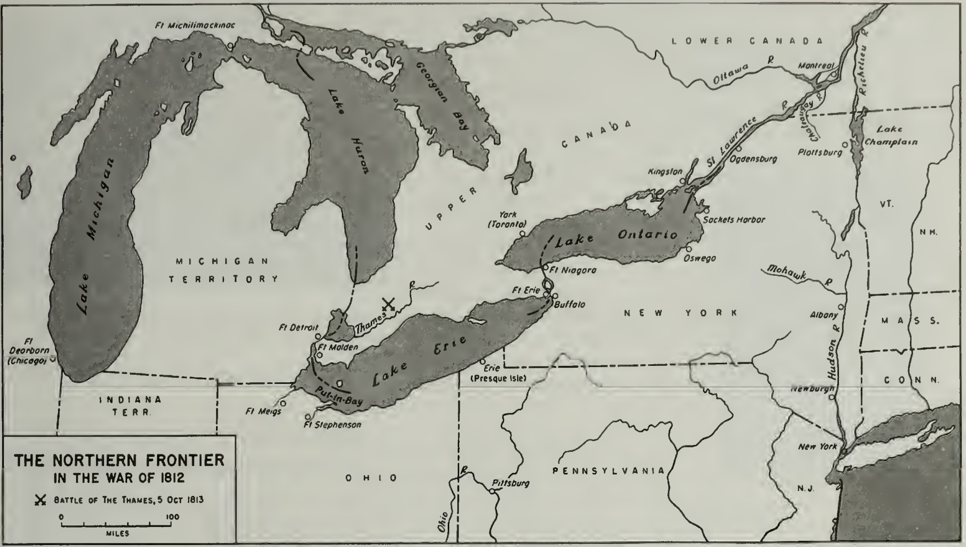
Looking back on the war: During this, the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, Canadians will be commemorating the event that ensured our unique identity. For Canadian Mennonites, it will be a time of mixed emotions; we are glad to be Canadians but not completely comfortable about the way it happened. And we are especially uncomfortable with how our current government intends to use the anniversary to promote a growing sense of militarism.

According to the government, the goal of the commemorations is not just to remember the conflict but to foster a sense of "renewed patriotism" and "standing on guard for the country."

It's very much in keeping with the image of Canada that is being projected by the current government—one that is more militaristic and patriotic, featuring images of the flag, soldiers, fighter jets and warships. But that's a different frame and narrative for viewing our country from the one we have been accustomed to.

Until recently, the dominant image of the military in Canadian life was through United Nations peacekeeping missions. It was a Canadian, after all—Lester B. Pearson, who later became Canada's 14th Prime Minister—who invented the concept during the Suez Crisis of 1956. For his idea, Pearson was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize.

Ever since then, United Nations peacekeepers have been a fixture in conflicts, and Canada has had a reputation as a peacekeeping nation. But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IN THE WAR OF 1812
Battle of The Thames, 5 Oct 1813
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that's changing now; our new brand of foreign policy is to choose sides, and the image of the Canadian peacekeeper is being replaced by what Prime Minister Stephen Harper calls the "courageous warrior."

This is a significant shift. During the first Gulf War, Canada stayed out of the conflict—a decision supported by most Canadians. More recently, however, we have supplied troops to Afghanistan and fighter aircraft to Libya. From 2006 until this year, we have been a nation at war, with 157 soldiers killed.

As for peacekeeping, a quick check of the United Nations website shows that Canada today ranks 53rd in terms of the number of people contributed to missions around the world. Twenty years ago, it was number one.

U.S. plan to invade Canada in 1939

Even though the United States and Canada have enjoyed two centuries of peace following the War of 1812, it turns out that America actually thought about invading Canada again—in 1930.

Called Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan—Red, the plan called for an attack on Canada in the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. This included an invasion from North Dakota to capture Winnipeg, Manitoba. The plan, which was withdrawn in 1939 and declassified in 1974, was part of a series of U.S. color-coded plans to attack various countries in the Western Hemisphere. Canada was clearly worried about just such a scenario, creating Defence Scheme No. 1 in 1921. The plan called for attacks on the United States in the event of an American invasion, in order to buy time for Great Britain to come to Canada's aid. Luckily for both nations, neither plan was put into effect.—*John Longhurst*

That was then; this is now; today there is clear desire by the Canadian Government to promote the military as a significant part of Canada's foreign policy and to highlight it during War of 1812 commemorations.

With all that in mind, how can Canadian Mennonites mark the War of 1812?

One group that wants to use the occasion to promote peace is the 1812 Bicentennial Peace Committee. The committee—which is supported by Mennonite Central Committee Ontario and various Ontario Mennonites—wants to make sure the peace witness of Mennonites, Quakers, Tunkers (now known as Brethren in Christ) and others who opposed that war so long ago isn't forgotten.

This would include people such as Duncan McColl, a Canadian Methodist minister in the Maritimes who prevented people in his area from fighting each other. When war was declared, McColl—whose members lived on both sides of the border in New Brunswick and Maine—called together the men from Canada and the United States in his parish and persuaded them to declare they wouldn't fight each other.

According to one report, McColl said: "I've baptized you and married you. And I don't believe you want to fight each other."

They agreed that they did not. Later, he personally confronted both American and British soldiers who came to the area and sent them elsewhere to do their fighting.

"We wanted to raise public awareness of the presence of these nonresistant Christians during the War of 1812 and to help people learn more about their understanding of what it meant to them to be Christians in a time of being invaded by a neighboring country," says Jonathan Seiling, a member of the committee.

For Carol Penner, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ontario, the commemoration is also a time to ask, "What was it like to be peaceful in a world at war? What did that position cost [pacifists] in terms of their standing in the community? Were there dissenting voices even among these peace churches?"

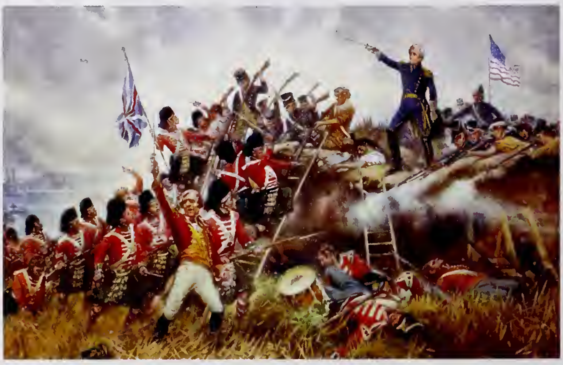
She also hopes the event will prompt questions about war and peace today as Canadians ponder the changes taking place in Canada and our relationship to our government during times of war.

Ways the committee hopes to address these questions include events, through the Web and by placing historical markers in the region about peaceful witness during the War of 1812.

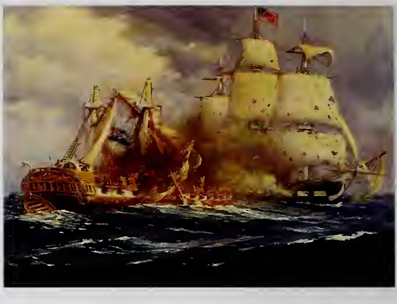
200 years of friendship: The War of 1812 is largely forgotten by people in both the United States and Canada—even though it gave Americans a national anthem and Canadians a country. And that's probably a good thing; in some countries, long-ago wars are bitterly remembered, with age-old grudges and boundary disputes passed on to poison succeeding generations.

If we remember anything from that war, it should be the almost 200 years of friendship between our two countries. Sure, Canada and the United States haven't always seen eye to eye on some things, and we have had our disagreements. But they have always been arguments between neighbors, not enemies. Our two centuries of peaceful coexistence on this continent is an enviable achievement, considering the amount of conflict that has occurred in the world over that span of time.

That is something everyone, including Mennonites on both sides of the border, can celebrate.—*John Longhurst, who directs communications and marketing for Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a partnership of 15 churches and church agencies working together to end global hunger*



The 1815 Battle of New Orleans was fought two weeks after the treaty ending the war was signed. Credit: Library of Congress | 1910 painting by Edward Percy Moran



Battles on and near the Great Lakes were the northern "theater" for the War of 1812.

Action between USS Constitution and HMS Guerriere, 19 August 1812, Anton Otto Fischer | U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command

War of 1812 brought prosperity to U.S. Mennonites

This year marks 200 years since the start of the War of 1812, and though this holds great significance for Canadians, it may go unnoticed by many U.S. Mennonites.

"The 1812 and Mexican wars seem not to have affected Mennonites and Amish much except to open new lands to which they might migrate," says Theron F. Schlabach in his book *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth-Century America*.

Young men of Mennonite parentage from Pennsylvania and Virginia did serve in the war, but these were not members of the church, according to *Mennonite Handbook of Information* by L. J. Heatwole.

"We have reason to thank God, since thus far none of us has been called to the militia, and since we have not had to furnish any money except the regular taxes. ... But now taxes are being placed on various things," wrote Martin Mellinger in a letter dated Nov. 9, 1813, to his brother-in-law and sister living in Germany.

Mellinger, a deacon in Lancaster (Pa.) County, recognized the plight of fellow Canadian Mennonites as they paid a tax to avoid fighting and "learned to know how precious peace is."

He also expressed gratefulness that American Mennonite farmers benefited from increased food prices resulting from the war.

"It was the first era of prosperity and sumptuous living for Mennonites in America," says Heatwole. —*Serena Townsend, intern for* The Mennonite

CALENDAR

"Jordan's Stormy Banks" will be presented by The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center on Eastern Mennonite University's Mainstage Theater, Harrisonburg, Va. Matinee performances at 3 p.m. on June 1, 2, 3, 10, 17 and 7:30 p.m. performances on June 8, 9, 15, 16. More information at 540-438-1275.

Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship plans its first gathering June 29-July 1 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mt. Pleasant, Pa. More information and online registration is available at retreat.mennohealth.org. Inquiries are also welcomed at info@mennohealth.org or by calling the MHF office at 1-888-406-3643.

Annual Meeting of The Casselman Historians, Sept. 21-22, at Maple Glen Mennonite Church, Grantsville, Md. Discussion of the role of Amish Mennonites of the Casselman River area in establishing communities in Mifflin County, Pa., and Tuscarawas/Holmes Counties in Ohio.

OBITUARIES

Balmer, Harold Francis, 92, Bluffton, Ohio, died April 28. Spouse: Anna Ruth Mullett Balmer. Parents: Henry and Emaline Swaney Balmer. Step-mother: Elizabeth Amstutz Balmer. Children: Brice, Beth Froning, Barb Watkins, Beverly Simon, Bretta Smith, Bennett, Bradley; 14 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Barkman, Betty, 81, Altona, Manitoba, died April 15. Parents: Pete L. and Helena Harms Barkman. Funeral: April 19 at Eastview Place, Altona.

Blosser, Elsie Arlene Zook, 90, Wellman, Iowa, died April 8. Spouse: Eugene Blosser. Parents: Albert and Leah Yoder Zook. Step-children: Phil Blosser, Rachel Derstine, Meiko Blosser. Funeral: April 11 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Bonham, Catherine Keathley, 87, Kalispell, Mont., died Feb. 1 of complications of colon cancer. Spouse: Robert E. Bonham. Parents: William Henry and Bertha R. Harwell Keathley. Children: Rusty, Cathy Bonham Brenneman, Tom; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 4 at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell.

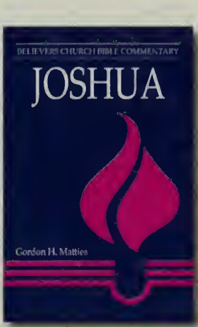
Clemmer, Arlene D. Nyce, 86, Souderton, Pa., died April 25, of Bulpar palsy. Spouse: Cyrus M. Clemmer (deceased). Parents: John and Lizzie Derstein Nyce. Children: Joyce Munro, Judith Stoltzfus, Timothy, James, Mark; nine grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 29 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Diffenbach, Beulah L. Landis, 86, New Holland, Pa., died April 18. Spouse: Abram W. Diffenbach (deceased). Parents: Miles B. and Anna Groff Landis. Children: Abram, Rosalee, Annette, David; 14 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Ebersole, Marjorie Eileen Alshouse, 90, Sterling, Ill., died April 10. Spouse: Donald Ellsworth Ebersole. Parents: Arthur and Dorothy Bowen Alshouse. Children: Barbara Vietmeier, Debra Ebersole, Donald, Dennis, Larry, Brian, Stephen, Bradley; 21 grandchildren; 32 great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Friesen, Jane Friesen, 55, Archbold, Ohio, died April 22 of cancer. Spouse: Kelvin Friesen. Parents: Abe K. and Dorothy M. Friesen. Children: Kimberly Friesen, Kathryn Friesen. Funeral: April 28 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Gianocavo, John, 83, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, died April 18 of kidney failure. Children: Greg, Susan Sterrett, Deborah Dudics, Clark, Cynthia Vargas, Alan, Patrick; 13 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.



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Gratz, Thelma Dailey, 92, Bluffton, Ohio, died Jan. 12. Spouse: Delbert Gratz (deceased). Parents: John Smith Dailey and Laura Jane Medley Dailey. Children: Del, Donna Gratz Huff, Conrad, Carolyn Gratz; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 16 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Halteman, Erma Souder, 87, Souderton, Pa., died April 19. Spouse: Aldus N. Halteman. Parents: Wilmer B. and Marietta M. Bergey Souder. Children: Sandra Freed, Ronald, Barry, Mary Jane Kratz; eight grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 23 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Headings, Dorothea Grace Kauffman, 82, West Liberty, Ohio, died Feb. 18. Parents: Harry and Linnie Smucker Kauffman. Children: Susan Gratz, Grace Kemp; six grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Champaign County, Ohio.

Helmkamp, Alice Mae Bergantzel Roth, 79, Canton, Ohio, died April 15. Spouse: James Helmkamp (deceased). Parents: George and Lucy Bergantzel. Children: Rodney Roth, Patricia Bala; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: April 22 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville, Ohio.

Hoffer, Lloyd Ludwig, 92, Aberdeen, Idaho, died April 16. Spouse: Helen Evelyn Jones Hoffer (deceased). Parents: Ludwig Loui and Marie Longhenrich Hoffer. Children: Lloyd Paul, Terrence, Dallas, Marsha Friesen, Sandra Loy Knapp, Randall, Brent; 24 grandchildren; 68 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Hostetler, Samuel, 90, Goshen, Ind., died March 8. Spouse: Dorothy E. Livengood Hostetler (deceased). Parents: Sam G. and Mattie Hershberger Hostetler. Children: Deloris Zehr, Debra Hochstetler, Donald, Glen, Gerald, Marvin, Willie; 19 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 14 at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Houdeshell, Raymond Eugene, 78, Denver, Colo., died March 30 of pneumonia. Spouse: Esther Ressier Houdeshell (deceased). Children: Thad, Tina Houdeshell; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at First Mennonite Church, Denver.

Kanagy, Lee Hartzler, 96, Belleville, Pa., died April 5 of injuries sustained in a fall. Spouse: Adella Brunk Kanagy. Parents: Jacob and Salina Peachey Kanagy. Children: Dan, Ruthy, David, Tim, Lois Papetti, John; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 10 at Allensville Mennonite Church, Allensville, Pa.

Krehbiel, Evelyn Louise Nunemaker, 86, Bluffton, Ohio, died Feb. 22. Spouse: Howard E. Krehbiel (deceased). Parents: Harvey and Alma Ruth Hostetler Nunemaker. Children: Annette Hilty, Connie Nunemaker, Jon, Steve; 15 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 3 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Lehman, Annie Charlotte Isaak, 100, Aberdeen, Idaho, died April 19. Spouse: Herbert Lehman (deceased). Parents: Peter and Marie Schroeder Isaak. Children: Stanley, Richard, Jerry, Audrey Gorgonzola, Marilyn Lehman; 15 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: April 23 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Liechty, Frederick H., 84, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 19. Spouse: Magdalene "Maggie" Lehman Liechty. Parents: Hiram and Fanny Beitler Liechty. Children: Nancy Liechty Loewen, Mary Liechty-Caskey; four grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 26 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Mann, Carol S. Miller, 71, Goshen, Ind., died April 1. Spouse: Richard Mann (deceased). Parents: Ralph O. and Lila Martin Miller. Children: Terri Masters, Ritchie Mann; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Martens, Elvina N. Neufeld, 86, Goshen, Ind., died April 11 of a stroke. Spouse: Rudy Martens. Parents: John and Catherine Neufeld. Children: John, Philip, Elizabeth Claassen; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Memorial service: April 16 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Nafziger, Andrew J., 85, Souderton, Pa., died April 19 of complications from Parkinson's Disease. Spouse: Ruth Kulp Nafziger. Parents: Eli and Magdalena Boshart Nafziger. Children: Marilyn Nafziger Macquarrie, Sylvia Nafziger Charles; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 24 at Bally Mennonite Church, Bally, Pa.

Nafziger, Florence Irene, 93, Goshen, Ind., died April 9. Parents: Christian and Lydia Birkey Nafziger. Funeral: April 12 at The Meetinghouse, Greencroft, Goshen.

Nyce, Ruth Mack Myers, 94, Lancaster, Pa., died Feb. 9. Spouse: H. Emerson Nyce (deceased). Spouse: Henry Myers (deceased). Parents: Andrew and Cora Detwiler Mack. Children: Nancy Yoder; Doris Rivera; five grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 11 at Providence Mennonite Church, Collegeville, Pa.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Reinhardt, Dale Richard, 81, Goshen, Ind., died April 22. Spouse: Doris Hartman Reinhardt. Parents: Orie and Mildred Martin Reinhardt. Children: Randy, Duane, Carl, Brent, Karen Martin, Leanne Ka Reinhardt; 16 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 26 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Roth, Burdette Ellis, 78, Des Moines, Iowa, died March 16. Spouse: Marilyn Dee Leichty Roth. Parents: Melvin Stauffer Roth and Hilda H. Hershberger Roth. Children: Bryan, Kevin, Carol Lovan; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 19 at Des Moines Mennonite Church.

Streeter, William Bradford, 49, South Bend, Ind., died April 20, of ocular melanoma. Spouse: Kathe Stoner Streeter. Parents: Carole Sanderson Streeter. Children: Mark, Eric. Funeral: April 25 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Stuckey, Virgie M. Amstutz, 99, West Unity, Ohio, died April 18. Spouse: Walter E. Stuckey (deceased). Parents: Gideon and Eliza Beck Amstutz. Children: William, Patricia Eberly; four grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: April 22 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Swartzentruber, Levi G., 87, Winesburg, Ohio, died April 17. Spouse: Iva Yoder Swartzentruber. Parents: Gideon and Susan Hershberger Swartzentruber. Children: Jim, Richard, Merlin, Velma Stauffer, Rose Zear; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Winesburg.

Voth, Peter C., 91, Altona, Manitoba, died April 15. Spouse: Mary Voth. Parents: Cornelius and Margaret Kroeker Voth. Children: Carol Kehler, Gerald, Rose Braun, Marilynn Arnott; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Waltner, Cleva Mae Schrag, 84, Freeman, S.D., died March 26. Spouse: Robert Waltner (deceased). Parents: John J. and Amelia Miller Schrag. Children: Ruth Mueller, Barb Yoder; five grandchildren. Funeral: April 2 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Weber, Nelson, 93, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died April 21, of cancer. Spouse: Anna Shantz Weber. Lovina Weber (deceased). Parents: Aaron and Hannah Weber. Children: Marcy Ninomiya, Clare Weber, Brenda Calder, Donna Weber, Susan Schmitz, Robert. Funeral: April 26 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Wert, Robert Kenneth., 72, Goshen, Ind., died April 4, of bone cancer. Spouse: Esther Thelma Glick Wert (deceased). Parents: Daniel David and Esther Mattie Umberger Wert. Children: Don Carufel-Wert, Dave Hockman-Wert; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Widrick, Derwood Herbert, 83, Beaver Falls, N.Y., died April 23. Spouse: Ruth Marie Moser Widrick. Parents: Leon and Katherine Lehman Widrick. Children: Linda Gnagey, Randy, Susan Bush, Nancy Lind, Joyce Grau, Amy Widrick; 13 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 26 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

Wyse, Lorraine M. Liechty, 92, Archbold, Ohio, died April 12. Spouse: Wilbur M. Wyse (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Emma Frey Liechty. Children: Jeanette Beck, Steve, Stan, Jim; 10 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 17 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Yoder, Alfred "Al" L., Jr., 83, Hesston, Kan., died April 3. Spouse: Irene Hershberger Yoder. Parents: Alfred L., Sr., and Zella Slaydon Yoder. Children: Melody Yoder Meyer; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 12 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

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Do you know someone who is interested in service? Mennonite Mission Network programs, Mennonite Voluntary Service, Radical Journey, Service Adventure and DOOR Dwell are accepting applications. Spread the word! Applications can be completed online at **Service.MennoniteMission.net**

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., seeks to fill three development officer positions beginning between July 1 and Aug. 1: ***development officer,*** (Elkhart 1 FTE); ***development officer Great Plains*** (Kan., 1 FTE)***; development officer Northeast*** (Pa., .5 FTE). Job descriptions and application information are available at www.ambs.edu/employment, or contact Missy Kauffman Schrock, director of development, mkschrock@ambs.edu, 574-296-6223.

Northern Virginia Mennonite Church (NVMC) located in Fairfax City, Va., is seeking a ***part-time interim pastor*** beginning in the summer 2012. Our candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and beliefs and strong preaching, pastoral care and leadership skills. Some experience and an M.Div. degree are preferred. NVMC is a member of Virginia Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. We are a small, culturally diverse, urban congregation with growth potential through active young adults and outreach ministries. Resumes/questions should be emailed to the Pastoral Search Committee at hsuchin@netzero.net.

Bethany Christian Schools (grades 4-12; enrollment 255) in Goshen, Ind., invites applications for the positions of ***business manager*** and ***high school Spanish teacher***. Both begin Aug. 1. For details, see www.bethanycs.net. To apply, submit a resume and letter of application to principal Allan Dueck at akdueck@bethanycs.net.

Job openings at **Sarasota Christian School** in Sarasota, Fla., for the 2012-13 school year: ***advanced math teacher*** (high school); **Bible teacher** (middle school) beginning January 2013; **language arts teacher** (middle school). Visit http://www.sarasotachristian.org/about-scs/employment.html or call 941-371-6481 for more information.

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ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
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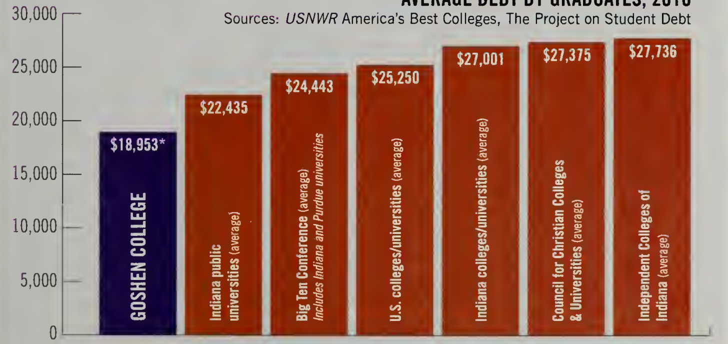
AVERAGE DEBT BY GRADUATES, 2010

Sources: *USNWR* America's Best Colleges, The Project on Student Debt



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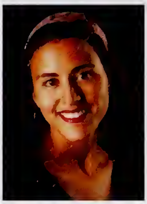


Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz lives in San Antonio, Texas.

A year ago on the night of our anniversary, Roberto, my husband, and I, after over a year of struggle and tension, finally experienced a shift in our relationship. That evening a miracle occurred. Not only did we experience a healing union but also, and more importantly, God showed up.

The night began with Roberto approaching me with pain in his upper shoulder, and out of desperation he asked for my help. I invited him to lie down, and what came next was unlike anything I had heard or read about in any church or theology class.

When my husband came to me in pain, I used some basic knowledge of chakras, energy centers in the body, to verbally guide him into entering that space in his body and to bring up an image of what he saw there. Within minutes, he began to guide his own healing and sensed serious shifts and clearing from within.

He could hear from God directly, and he wept. I sat in amazement. Was this really happening in front of me and to us? Soon he asked for permission to sense what my body was holding, and he held his hand out without touching me. He could not only sense the intense energy but had knowledge of its meaning: anger, irritation and frustration, beginning from the right-hand side of my rib cage, to the center and down my body.

Six months later, I had my first gallbladder attack and soon discovered I was full of parasites. God had spoken truth of my weakness before I experienced it physically.

Months later, my friend Crista suddenly became ill one afternoon in her home. Because of my personal experience with Roberto's ability, I ventured into this practice as well. I put my hand out without touching her in the location of her pain. I could physically feel as if the skin on my hand was being peeled away from me. This was my first experience with this energy.

What is this, and why haven't Christians spoken about this? I asked myself. What is this called? The gifts of the Spirit include healing, but soon I understood that coupled with silence and concentration one can feel the energy and heat radiating from our bodies without ever touching the person. This can guide us into understanding the roots of disease and pain and finding healing and deliverance.

One afternoon I had a young guest in my home, and Crista was present. My guest was hurting beyond what she was willing to express, and I asked for permission to guide my hand around her torso. I invited Crista to come over and "feel" this, believing she didn't know much about sensing energy, and within minutes, intuitively, she moved her hands in a pulling motion, as if she were pulling something out of her body without even touching her, and our young friend found relief. Taking advantage of the situation, I had a slight headache and asked her to do the same for me. She did, and it eased.

I now understand the connection Jesus had to the energetic well-being of those around him and how his healings are not lost with his departure to the Father.

In the stories of Roberto and Crista, I see at least two different, God-given, spiritual gifts present. In one is the gift of knowledge that God communicates through physical, bodily energy, and the other may be real spiritual/emotional/physical healing. Other gifts may be present within this practice, and I trust that above all, Christ is lifted up, and his body is healed.

Upon biblical reflection, I now understand the connection Jesus had to the energetic well-being of those around him and how his healings are not lost with his departure to the Father. They are for us today. Thanks to the Spirit within us, greater works are before us.

The closest name for this practice we've discovered is Reiki. While none of us has pursued Reiki instruction as of yet, learning it through prayer and mediation with the Spirit has changed the way we now pray for ourselves and for others.

I invite you to explore and listen to your body and the bodies of your loved ones. Our bodies are crying out for healing, for God. God is talking. Are you listening? "Ask and you shall receive." "If any of you lack wisdom, ask." The Spirit is moving and inviting you to her work. TM

Does Facebook make us lonely?

An article in the May issue of *The Atlantic*, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?" by Stephen Marche, asks an important question.

Many if not most of us use Facebook, which has 845 million users and took in $3.7 billion last year. One of every 13 people on Earth is a Facebook user. Given our commitment to community, how should we approach this?

Other writers, such as Eric Klinenberg in his new book *Going Solo*, have pointed out the increasing isolation of Americans. He writes that in 1950, less than 10 percent of American households contained only one person, whereas in 2010, 27 percent of households had just one person.

But Marche is interested in the increase in loneliness, which, he says, "makes us miserable."

At the same time, loneliness is hard to define or diagnose. He says the best tool is the UCLA Loneliness Scale. According to one major study, 20 percent of Americans—about 60 million people—are unhappy with their lives because of loneliness.

Though loneliness and being alone are not the same, both are on the rise. "In 1985, only 10 percent of Americans said they had no one with whom to discuss important matters. ... By 2004, 25 percent had nobody to talk to."

Further, Marche writes, "being lonely is extremely bad for your health." Lonely people are more likely to be put in a geriatric home at an early age, less likely to exercise, more likely to be obese, less likely to survive a serious operation, more likely to be depressed and to suffer dementia.

Marche goes on to ask if Facebook contributes to loneliness or brings us together. Determining an answer is tricky. For example, he asks, "Does the Internet make people lonely, or are lonely people more attracted to the Internet?"

Many studies have been done, and more are ongoing. John Cacioppo, director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago, in his 2008 book *Loneliness*, notes that loneliness affects not only the brain but the basic process of DNA transcription.

Cacioppo says that Internet communication allows only ersatz intimacy. "Surrogates can never make up completely for the absence of the real thing," he writes. And "the real thing" is actual people, in the flesh.

He points out that "using social media doesn't create new social networks; it just transfers established networks from one platform to another."

Our experience of loneliness corresponds to the proportion of face-to-face interactions to online interactions. "The greater proportion of online interactions, the lonelier you are."

Cacioppo doesn't blame the technology but calls it a tool. "It's like a car. You can drive it to pick up your friends. Or you can drive alone."

Sherry Turkle, in her 2011 book *Alone Together*, says that the problem with digital intimacy is that it is ultimately incomplete. "The ties we form through the Internet are not, in the end, the ties that bind," she writes.

An Australian study found that "Facebook users have higher levels of total narcissism, exhibitionism and leadership than Facebook nonusers."

And narcissism, Marche writes, "is the flip side of loneliness."

He says the danger of Facebook is that it threatens to alter the very nature of solitude. More than half of Facebook users log on every day. He concludes: "Facebook denies us a pleasure whose profundity we had underestimated: the chance to forget about ourselves for a while, the chance to disconnect."

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

FILM REVIEWS

Blue Like Jazz (PG-13) is based on the popular book and follows Don, a 19-year-old in Texas who tries to escape his Bible-Belt upbringing by going to Reed College in Portland, Ore. His dive into pagan behavior is a bit over-the-top, but his turn to a more mature faith is more nuanced than most "Christian" films.—*Gordon Houser*

Bully (PG-13) is a powerful documentary that should be seen by all school administrators and boards. It follows over the course of a school year five families with children who've been bullied. Two have committed suicide. The film captures scenes of bullying behavior. Must viewing.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

Gandhi and the Unspeakable: His Final Experiment with the Truth by James W. Douglass (Orbis Books, 2012, $24) shows how those who conspired to kill Gandhi hoped to destroy a compelling vision of peace, nonviolence, and reconciliation. Douglass contrasts Gandhi's experiments with truth to "the unspeakable political and cultural forces arrayed against truth. This is a follow-up to Douglass' massive book on JFK, who, like Gandhi, "was killed by a conspiracy that threatened to destroy a democracy."—*gh*

Desert Spirituality and Cultural Resistance: From Ancient Monks to Mountain Refugees by Belden C. Lane (CMU Press, 2011, $14) presents the 2010 J.J. Thiessen Lectures at Canadian Mennonite University. Lane, a storyteller and theologian, combines his interest in geography and the spirituality of Desert Christians from the fourth century. He notes that "in the Scriptures God is always leading God's people into the desert and up the mountain, taking them to an edge, to a liminal place where ordinary things fall apart." He draws lessons for today, such as this: "We can know ourselves to be unconditionally loved only in a place where we have no purchasing power, with nothing to give in response."—*gh*

RESOURCES

Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality by Diana L. Hayes (Orbis Books, 2012, $22) is an accessible introduction to African American spirituality. It provides a broad overview of developments in both Protestant and Catholic traditions.

Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability and Inclusion by Mark I. Pinsky (Alban Institute, 2012, $18) tells 64 stories about the way faith communities welcome and affirm people with disabilities in worship, ministry, fellowship and leadership. Churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and other congregations do this not only because it is the right thing to do but because they are made better by the gifts of all people.

Almost Amish: One Woman's Quest for a Slower, Simpler, More Sustainable Life by Nancy Sleeth (Tyndale House, 2012, $14.99) tells how, following a spiritual conversion and an environmental awakening, Sleeth and her family reduced their electricity use to a 10th and their fossil fuel use to one-third the national average.

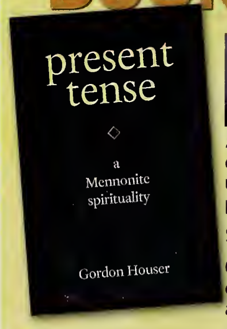
Dive: Devotions for Deeper Living by Cindy Massanari Breeze (Herald Press, 2012, $16.99) includes 108 meditations, rooted in Scripture and prayer, grouped under 18 topical sections, each ending with a practical guide for "living it out." It confronts difficult topics, such as trauma and failure, and offers humor, real-life stories and celebration.

God and Charles Dickens: Recovering the Christian Voice of a Classic Author by Gary L. Colledge (Brazos Press, 2012, $19.99) is written for pastors, students and laity and looks at Dickens' life and work topically, arguing that Christian faith was front and center in some of what Dickens wrote and implicit throughout various characters and plots.

Lamentations and the Song of Songs by Harvey Cox and Stephanie Paulsell (Westminster John Knox Press, 2012, $30) consider two books of the Old Testament that deal with violence and sex. This is the latest volume in the Belief series, which presents a theological commentary on the Bible.

Living Into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us by Christine D. Pohl (Eerdmans, 2012, $20) looks at four specific Christian practices—gratitude, promise-keeping, truth-telling and hospitality—that can counteract the destructive forces of betrayal, deception, grumbling, envy and exclusion that every church and organization has experienced and can help churches and individuals build and sustain vibrant communities. She shows how to cultivate these practices in congregations and families.

Books from the editors



Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality, by Gordon Houser, explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

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Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of* Sojourners

EVERETT J. THOMAS
JOHANN

Everett Thomas' novel ***Johann*** is historical fiction describing the life of Mennonites in Pennsylvania in the 18th century as the French and Indian War unfolded.

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Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (www.lmhs.org), amazon.com or betterworldbooks.com

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
—*John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College*

Johann was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
—*Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society*

Signposts: A self-giving community

In the midst of a very severe trial, [the Macedonians'] overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.—2 Corinthians 8:2-3 (TNIV)

Whenever I read Paul's letters to the churches, I am moved by the many signs of God at work, enabling God's people to carry out God's mission beyond their own natural means. Paul worried about the immaturity and self-centeredness of the church at Corinth, so he reminds them of their high calling in Christ. In the passage cited above, Paul appeals to the example of the neighboring church at Macedonia as a model of self-giving love. This missional church put its faith into action by sharing from its limited resources.

In the midst of their struggles, the Macedonians demonstrated a vital trait of the missional church. Indeed, Paul testified that they gave "beyond their ability" to bring assistance to a sister church who was in serious need. It gives me hope that our church, too, can transcend the natural tendency to focus on ourselves, empowered by the Holy Power to give to others beyond our natural limitations.

I'm gripped by Paul's choice of an example of generosity from an impoverished group—hardly the people that first come to mind in a modern fund-raising campaign. Yet this is consistent with my own experience among "mission churches" in poorer countries and the stories I hear from others. Statistics show that many of the so-called poorer churches give more generously (at least by percentage) to others in need than do wealthy churches. I call to mind the widow who put her last coins into the temple offering. What love and devotion to God must surely have motivated that act of generosity. Jesus commended her for giving more than all the others.

It's clear that missional churches put their faith into action; they "walk the talk" by the way they relate to others around them. That's the point of the sixth missional trait that is highlighted in the Purposeful Plan for our church:

Missional character trait: A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.

Signpost: Acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of one another both in the church and in the locale characterize the generosity of the community.

Recently I've noticed the transformative work wrought by the Spirit in the life of Matthew, the apostle. Jesus called Matthew to become a disciple when he was a tax collector. But over time, Matthew became a foremost teacher on generosity. Matthew's Gospel has more references to money than any other New Testament book. In that vein, Matthew explains the principles of giving. He is the only Gospel writer who mentions the importance of giving alms in secret, without letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing (Matthew 6:1-4). He is the only one who speaks of the great white throne judgment, where people will be judged by how they gave to others (25:31-46). He is the only one who mentions Jesus' saying that when we give to the needs of the disciples, we give to Christ (10:40-42). Matthew's gift of generosity has shaped our understanding of Christian faith, and helps to form us in the image of Christ.

Many of the so-called poorer churches give more generously … to others in need than do wealthy churches.

Generous sharing is but one of many ways Christians demonstrate in word and deed how much they care for one another and the community around them. If you're looking for a practical list, you might use a Bible concordance to find the dozens of exhortations with the words "one another" or "each other." Better yet, open your eyes to the evidence that God is at work in the world, turning people from self-centeredness to engage in the many ways God uses to bring healing and hope to the world. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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200 years later

Everett J. Thomas

Are you planning to do anything on the church, Mennonites and the War of 1812? This is the 200th anniversary of that war. Without it—without the defeat of the American invasion of Canada—there would be no Canada and no Mennonite Church Canada. … Americans won't be thinking about the war at all, partly because you lost it—well, technically, it was a draw—and because it wasn't that significant in the big scheme of things. You did get a national anthem out of it, though.—John Longhurst

This cheeky email from a Canadian friend sparked my interest in a war we don't spend much time talking about. That's unfortunate, because the current relationship between Canada and the United States got off to a rocky start when we invaded Canada, and England invaded the United States on Canada's behalf. But 200 years later, these former enemies are friends and share the longest undefended border in the world.

How is it that some enemies become friends while other enemies maintain ugly animosities for generations? It seems impossible that Israel and Palestine would ever have an undefended border. Or North and South Korea. Or Pakistan and India.

Perhaps if we get out of the way, as England did for us in 1815, Iraq and Afghanistan can befriend their enemies.

Yet our country is now allied with former enemies Japan and Germany, mortal adversaries during World War II. Our country is also closest in culture and shared interests with the country to the north that we still had plans to invade as late as 1930 (see Longhurst's News Analysis beginning on page 44).

Perhaps it's easier for enemies to become friends when the original quarrel is not between the two of them. That was the case with the War of 1812.

"The conflict between our two nations actually lasted about three years," writes Longhurst. "It began on June 19 [1812], when the United States declared war on Great Britain. Reasons for the war included British trade restrictions against the United States, the impressments of American citizens into the Royal Navy, British support for Aboriginal people fighting against Americans in the west and a desire by some American politicians to annex Canada."

The war was fought in three "theaters." For Canadians, the one that matters most was the battles on and near the Great Lakes. But the British also invaded Baltimore—the battle that generated the Star-Spangled Banner—and New Orleans. While both the British and U.S. forces temporarily occupied each other's territory, a treaty to end the war returned the territories.

An important but forgotten dynamic in the war: the British were allied with several Native American nations and planned to create an independent Indian state in the Midwest under British sponsorship. Had the British won, the shape of our nation and the plight of Native Americans could have been significantly different.

So what's worth remembering about this war?

The battles that took so many lives and property—the British burned Washington D.C.—were a part of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. For the British, what happened on our continent was a sideshow and quickly forgotten.

How many people today are being harmed and property destroyed because of the "sideshows" to our nation's wars? Will Iraq and Afghanistan, where war has created so much carnage, remember the wars as anything other than an imperialistic empire attempting to protect its access to oil?

Perhaps if we get out of the way, as England did for us in 1815, Iraq and Afghanistan can befriend their enemies. We've done that with Canada.—*ejt*

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TheMennonite July 2012 | Volume 15, Number 7

JUL 5 2012

CONTENTS

AMBS
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12 Full circle
—Laurie Oswald Robinson

16 Christian patriots
—Harold E. Bauman

19 Who can stand against it?
—Ted Grimsrud

23 Untamed tiger
—Jane Yoder-Short

26 Simplistic gospel
—Clarence Rempel

28 Never again
—Jake Buhler

32 Kraybill is Mennonite World Conference president-elect—Tim Huber

34 Swiss Anabaptist history still powerful—Tim Huber

36 Businesses in Paraguay use chaplains—Andrew Clouse

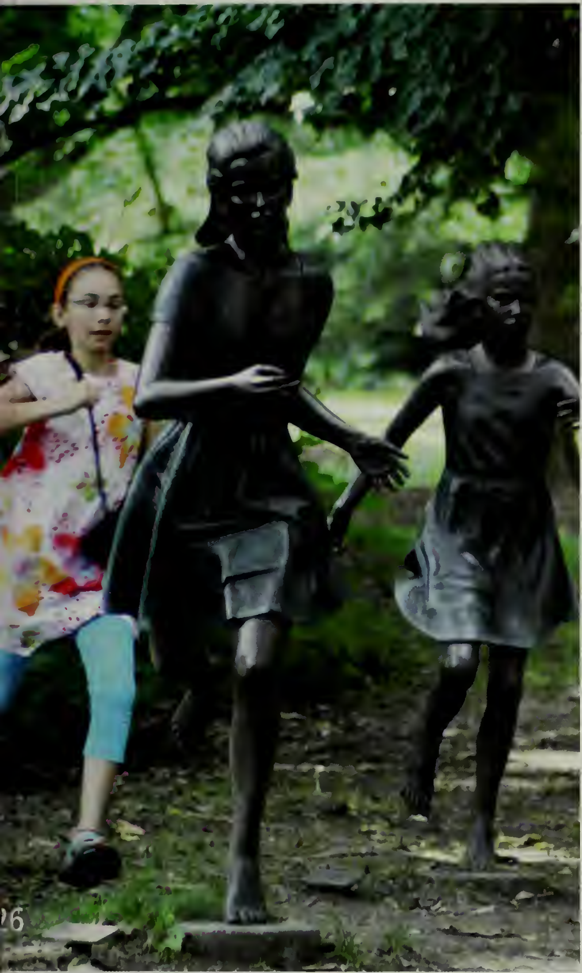
37 Pastoring in dangerous Bogotá neighborhood
—Theresé Witmer

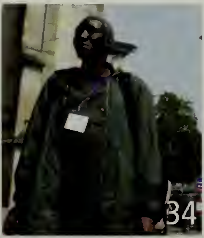
38 Feeding cattle for the church—Carole Duerksen

40 MDS ends seven-year recovery effort in New Orleans—Sheldon C. Good

42 Same-sex unions spark two-part decision
—Anna Groff

44 How are we doing as a peace church?—André Gingerich Stoner





ON THE COVER: Photo by Jonathan Charles

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
47 For the Record
50 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

TheMennonite
July 2012 | Volume 15, Number 7

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The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1703
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Need nonconformity

I very much appreciated Berry Friesen's call for an eighth priority for Mennonite Church USA (Opinion, June). The seven priorities are all good but could be readily adopted by any Christian church. I miss the distinctively Mennonite call to Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

When I first became acquainted with the Mennonite Church 40 years ago, I was surprised that faithful church members did not always see "nonconformity" in the positive light that I did. They were too close to the era of plain dress and conference discipline.

Berry Friesen is challenging us to rethink that traditional value. He invites us to "be not conformed" to the pervasive American values of militarism, consumerism and corporatism.

I hope Mennonite Church USA leaders will take his challenge seriously and add an eighth priority when they meet in Phoenix, Ariz.—*Richard K. MacMaster, Gainesville, Fla.*

Tillie Yoder Nauraine

Margaret and I want to thank you for the excellent cover article in the May issue on Tillie Yoder Nauraine, Camp Ebenezer and Gladstone Mennonite Church. The information shows wide research as well as being accurate and most interesting. It is a job well done.

Margaret served at Camp Ebenezer the second year (1949), and together we served at the camp the third year. We appreciate *The Mennonite* each month. Thank you again for featuring a loving friend.—*Vernon Miller, Streetsboro, Ohio*

I have three observations on the article about my aunt Tillie Yoder Nauraine (May): First, she grew up in Kokomo, Ind., not Holmes County, Ohio. She was in her 20s when the family moved to Ohio. Second, while I have heard many stories from my aunts and uncles regarding the severe discipline they received from Grandpa and Grandma—and while it would be considered abusive by today's standards—I have no doubt such treatment was common at the time. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was certainly a mainstay of parenting advice inside and outside the church in those days. To say Tillie had an abusive childhood is at best an anachronism.

Finally, the artistic license employed in speculating that an abusive childhood may have been one of the reasons Aunt Tillie reached out to others with compassion is ill-informed and dangerous. Ill-informed because it is well documented that being abused more often results in a person becoming an abuser than becoming compassionate. Dangerous because the connection gives cause for those abusing children to continue ("It made Tillie Yoder into a compassionate, caring servant, and one day you'll thank me that it did the same for you.")

Tillie was compassionate and had a heart for service because she heard those values taught and saw them modeled in her childhood home. Two of her brothers, John and my father Aden, and one of her sisters, Ann, became ordained pastors and served a variety of congregations compassionately and effectively. Her sister Elizabeth gave her life to service in the Salvation Army, reaching the rank of Captain and touching many lives and communities with her love and devotion.

This summer, the surviving siblings of Tillie, many of their children, more than a few of their grandchildren and even a few "greats" will gather in Goshen, Ind., for our family reunion. Yes, there will be some stories and tears about the difficulty of growing up in the Amish and Mennonite communities of the Depression years. But there will be many more stories of enduring faith, deep commitment to Christ, the church and each other, and to compassion and service for others. Values that Jacob S. Yoder and Lovina Helmuth Yoder instilled in their children's children's children. Now there's a story worth researching carefully and telling well.—*Steve Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Editor's note: *After personally reading Tillie's diary entries in the Archives of Mennonite Church USA, I did not consider as inappropriate the writers' qualified suggestion that abuse by her parents might have been a reason for Tillie's compassion on young children ("perhaps one of the reasons," the article said). The extensive collection of Yoder Nauraine's writings and photographs in the Archives is available to any researcher. The notes our writers collected from their research are available upon request from editor@themennonite.org.*

Handling divorce

Eric Litwiller's article ("Handling Divorce," May) on the amicable divorce between him and his wife was so open and honest I shared it on my Facebook page. Here are some of the responses I received: "I wonder what he does with Paul's words in Ephesians 5 that our marriages reflect the relationship between Christ and the church?" Another person wrote, "I don't believe our happiness is God's number one objective." And still another post was even more direct: "God hates divorce. It hurts so many people." So most of the responses I received were critical, but one friend did appreciate *The Mennonite* publishing an article such as this one.

I had mixed feelings about it. Besides it being so well-written, I found Litwiller's article to be utterly transparent. But the article also caused me to cringe, wondering if others in similar situations might decide to end their marriages for the sake of finding happiness.—*Tim Schultz, Aurora, Ohio*

I was taken aback by the article "Handling Divorce." I can't believe it was even published. Here we have a man rejoicing in tearing apart his marriage vows, when God has clearly said "let no man separate." I understand the divorce and remarriage issue is messy with no easy answers, but do we really have to uphold divorce as being glorious the way this article does?

This article flies in the face of the spirit of marriage in the New Testament. Can't we print articles rejoicing in stories of God's reconciliation work in a marriage that was on the rocks before God did a work of healing?

Our lives are but a vapor in the grand scheme of time, but there are generations coming behind us who will pay the price for this kind of me-first attitude and thinking. I look into the eyes of my four daughters and realize it is up to me to leave a legacy for them to walk in. Suppose one of their husbands someday picks up an article like this and decides that his personal happiness is more important than his marriage covenant? Our children pay the price for us letting this stuff pass as truth. As the old song says, "May those who come behind us find us faithful. —*Matthew Funk, Mifflinburg, Pa.*

Eric Litwiller's "Handling Divorce" is disturbing for its lack of tragedy. No doubt much was left out of this story, but what remains must be challenged.

(*Continued on page 54*)

IN THIS ISSUE

Many years ago, when the children of missionaries played with a young Kenyan friend named Nelson Okanya, none of them could have imagined that he would one day lead the very mission agency employing their parents—Eastern Mennonite Missions (page 12).

"It's a new day in missions," Okanya says, "because the world is coming here to the doorstep of North America. ... North American-based mission agencies need to share the gospel with the influx of people from other cultures and religions who are being drawn to this country."

It's also a new day for Mennonite World Conference. When Zimbabwean Danisa Ndlovu's six-year term as moderator ends in 2015, former seminary president J. Nelson Kraybill will succeed him (page 32). Kraybill was chosen as president-elect during MWC's General Council meeting May 20-27 in Switzerland.

The news section also carries a story about a Central District Conference pastor who has performed three same-sex covenanting ceremonies in the past year (page 42). Conference delegates will have a chance to respond during their June 21-23 meeting, which is after this issue of *The Mennonite* goes to press. In other news, we publish the latest survey of Mennonite Church USA adherents in the United States (page 43). The work was done through the assistance of a Lilly Endowment grant and surveyed 236 faith groups.

Finally, read the thorough and thoughtful News Analysis beginning on page 44. This work, done primarily by André Gingerich Stoner, responds to a question that came to Mennonite Church USA from Mennonite World Conference: How are we doing as a peace church? The analysis includes positives as well as negatives expressed as "concerns."—*Editor*

Phoenix church members build home after fire

PHOENIX, Ariz.—The Wallow Fire in Arizona last year—one of the largest in the state's history—forced thousands of individuals to evacuate. The human-caused fire began on May 29, 2011.

A year later, individuals still suffer losses. Individuals such as Jim and Kat Brennan, not only had to leave their home in Nutrioso, Ariz., but lost it in the fire.

Through Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix decided to respond to the fire by building a new home for the Brennans.

On May 25-28, a group of 15 from Trinity and six other individuals from Phoenix traveled east to Nutrioso. They were hosted by Jesus First Community Church in Eager, Ariz.

Cory Axness, a member of Trinity who lives in Glendale, led the MDS group. He said he hopes for the house to be finished by the beginning of July.

During the May weekend, they built walls, moved the generator sheds and more, according to Axness. The next weekend some of the group returned to finish the framing and closets. They planned to work on the siding and roof in the coming weekends.—*Anna Groff*

MC USA executive committee responds to same-sex unions

ELKHART, Ind.—The executive committee of the Executive Board has responded to same-sex covenanting ceremonies performed by pastors in Illinois and Kansas in the past year. In a letter on June 13, the committee made clear that such ceremonies are not congruent with *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

"The board owns the understanding of our confession of faith that sexual union is to happen between one man and one woman, who are committed to each other for life in holy marriage," the letter said. "The board has no plans to suggest that the church should change its current understanding and commitments."

The letter also said that the Executive Board cannot intervene in decisions area conferences are making in response to pastors performing same-sex covenanting ceremonies.

"The national church does not have the authority to control the discussion or decisions at [congregation and area conference] levels," the letter said. "Congregations decide on their members, and conferences decide on member congregations. Ministerial credentials are held at the conference level and thus a minister's accountability is to the area conference rather than the national conference. We are aware that our polity creates some differences in the practice of church discipline from conference to conference."

In 2011, Western District Conference pastor Joanna Harader performed a same-sex covenanting ceremony. Since Illinois made same-sex unions legal on July 1, 2011, Central District pastor Megan Ramer has performed three such ceremonies.

The Executive Board's executive committee includes Dick Thomas, moderator; Elizabeth Soto, moderator-elect; Addie Banks; David Boshart; Patricia Shelly and Ervin Stutzman, executive director. —*Everett J. Thomas*

Photo courtesy of Syrian Orthodox Church

MCC responds to food crisis in Sahel

In April, Bishops Selwanos Petros al-Nemeh and Eustathius Matta Roham of the Syrian Orthodox Church, visited many people affected by violence in Homs, Syria, including Zaher Bakhos, a man who was shot and paralyzed by an unknown sniper.—*MCC*

Plans for Anabaptist chair at Fuller continue

WHITERIVER, Ariz.—Since 2007, Mennonite and other Anabaptist professors at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., have been working to establish the Yoder-McClendon Chair in Anabaptist Studies.

In a June 4 interview, Wilbert Shenk said the economic recession has slowed progress. Shenk is senior professor of mission history and contemporary culture at Fuller Theological Seminary. He previously taught at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Prior to that he was director of Overseas Ministries, Mennonite Board of Missions.

In recent months he and others have been talking with interested people. "We are encouraged by positive signs of economic improvement," Shenk said.

Andy Lay, senior director of development at Fuller Theological Seminary, is responsible for working with potential donors. Fuller is a multi-denominational institution with more than 4,000 students served through seven locations in the United States. Students from 65 nations are studying at Fuller.

The name of the proposed chair honors Anabaptist theologians John Howard Yoder (1927-1997) and James W. McClendon Jr. (1924-2000). McClendon, inspired by Yoder's work, cultivated connections between self-identified Anabaptists and other church traditions. He taught at Fuller for 10 years.

The goal for the project is $2.5 million to allow Fuller to permanently endow the chair and provide for a professor's salary, research support staff, travel and Ph.D. student fellowships. *—Anna Groff*

Photo provided

Crematorium in Thailand

Christians in Thailand, a majority Buddhist nation where cremation is the preferred way of honoring the dead, have had to use Buddhist crematoriums for services. With financial help from Mennonite Church Canada and Bethesda Mennonite Church in Henderson, Neb., this crematorium, on the grounds of Living Water Church in Borabu, will enable Christians there to perform those ceremonies for fellow Christians.*—Mennonite Mission Network*

Turkish official receives CPT report on attacks

SULAIMANI, Iraq—The Iraqi Kurdistan Christian Peacemaker Team hand-delivered a new report detailing harm to civilian Kurds from Turkey's cross-border military actions to a Turkish diplomat. The meeting with Abdullah Topçu, Vice Consul in the Turkish consulate of Hawler, Iraqi Kurdistan, took place on May 15.

While Turkey claims its attacks target the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), CPT's report, "Disrupted Lives: the Effects of Cross-Border Attacks by Turkey and Iran on Kurdish Villages," documents extensive impacts on civilian life in the Pshdar District of Iraqi Kurdistan.*—CPT*

Catholics remember Anabaptist martyr

COLLEGEVILLE, Minn.—On May 20, a Benedictine abbot whose ancestors had once been Dutch Mennonites, led in commemorating the 485th anniversary of the martyrdom of Michael Sattler. Sattler had been a Benedictine but left during the Peasants War of 1525 to become an Anabaptist leader. He is regarded as the primary author of the Schleitheim Confession.

The Abbot was Fr. John Klassen, the leader of the largest Benedictine monastery in North America, Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville.

The event was based on more than a decade of conversation between Mennonites and Catholics at Saint John's in annual Bridgefolk conferences. It also followed the formal ecumenical dialogue that began about the same time and produced the document "Called Together to Be Peacemakers," published by the Vatican and Mennonite World Conference in 2004.*—Bridgefolk*

Stutzman, Seiling named to direct new curriculum

WATERLOO, Ont., HARRISONBURG, Va., and ELGIN, Ill.—MennoMedia and Brethren Press have hired Rose Stutzman and Rebecca Seiling to direct and develop the next generation of Sunday school curriculum for children and youth. This new, yet-to-be-named curriculum will succeed *Gather 'Round: Hearing and Sharing God's Good News*, which is scheduled to conclude after the summer of 2014.

As project director, Rose Stutzman will oversee the new curriculum through its creative design, implementation and duration. She has served as *Gather 'Round* editor since 2006 and will continue in that role part-time for the next year. Rebecca Seiling, who has served as a *Gather 'Round* contract writer and editor, is project developer, a one-year position to develop the new curriculum.*—MennoMedia*

Connecting Families holds 23rd annual retreat

REISTERSTOWN, Md.—The 23rd annual gathering of Connecting Families was held April 19-21 at the Pearlstone Retreat Center in Reisterstown. Connecting Families meets one weekend each year as a means to connect families and individuals who face issues of same-gender sexual attraction.

Connecting Families is part of the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT interests, especially those who wish to remain connected to their church. The group this year consisted of 56 people from four countries and 12 states.

The gathering was led by Randall Spaulding, a former Mennonite pastor. The theme for the weekend was, "You shall know them by their fruits—not their orientation."

The event also included stories from two families who have been confronted with sexual orientation issues. There were times for individual sharing and a worship service on Sunday morning.

Connecting Families will meet next May 17-19, 2013.*—Tom Chamness*

Loneliness and solitude

Ron Adams is pastor at Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

My wife is in Pennsylvania. She and our sons are packing up the rest of the house we still own there. She is also seeing all the friends we left behind when we moved to Wisconsin. Soon she and one of our sons will drive the truck to Madison, and we will move the last of our belongings into our new home. It feels like we are finally settling in here.

Meanwhile, I'm alone in the apartment where we've lived for the past nine months. I, too, am moving things to the new house. Boxes and bookshelves and everything I can haul over in our car. Yesterday I painted a bedroom in the new house; it had been an outrageous and entirely unwelcome shade of pink. It's now a pleasant blue. I've been busy while here alone.

The apartment is quiet. This is a good thing, since there is no one for me to talk to but myself. I listen to music. I watch movies. I read. I put things in boxes. I do my pastoral work. And I have time left over to think.

I occasionally feel lonely. Marilou and I talk every evening. Wonderful as that is, it doesn't really shake the loneliness. In fact, her being in Lancaster makes me even more aware of the friends and things we left behind. Now I'm lonely and sad.

Fortunately, I'm also free to let my mind wander. No one to construct coherent thoughts for but myself. Lo and behold, in this quiet and lonely place I am learning some things about myself and about my vocation.

I am learning the difference between being alone and being in solitude. I've tended to conflate the two. But being alone, I am discovering, is to be aware of an emptiness, a loss. Being alone means being without the company of my best friend and companion. Being alone means regretting what is not there, what is left behind. Being alone is spending time in the company of nothing but my thoughts and memories. And no matter how benevolent those thoughts and memories are, they cannot sustain me for long.

Solitude, though, is about fullness. It's about spaciousness, room to breathe. It's an expectant space in which I learn to rest in the loving presence of God. It's about finding, not losing. Hoping, not regretting. Communing with the Spirit, not just listening to my own head. It's the kind of space that Jesus entered in order to rest for a while from all the noise we humans make. Solitude is that quiet, holy place where we can lay down everything else but our desire to be embraced by the One who never leaves us or forsakes us.

I'm learning that I can do without aloneness. But I need times of solitude to remember that I am loved.

I am learning the difference between being alone and being in solitude. I've tended to conflate the two.

I'm learning, too, about my vocation. I'm learning that a call to a new congregation does not preclude missing the old. Being called to Madison Mennonite Church does not immunize me against the grief of letting go. It does not shield me from the learning curve or make the change easy. If anything, several months into my new community I miss the old one even more. Being called doesn't toughen my heart.

But what it does do is this: It tells me that I am exactly where I belong, that the Holy Spirit really was at work in our coming together, Madison Mennonite and me. This frees me from second-guessing. Yes, I miss my old community. And yes, it is right that I am here rather than there, that we are here rather than there.

We've got new friends, people we already trust with our lives. Generous people we can count on no matter what comes. People who make us laugh and think and cry and encourage us to be more faithful. People who want only the best for us and work hard to make that best happen. People who desire to offer good news to our community. We are happy here.

I have a few more boxes to pack. We'll see what else I can learn here alone in this quiet apartment. TM

In praise of translators

In May, I spent nearly two weeks immersed in a profusion of languages—a wonderfully diverse, sometimes confusing polyglot of tongues that has left me marveling at the miracle of communication.

The encounter started May 17-20 with the Mennonitische Europäische Regionalkonferenz, or MERK (Mennonite European Regional Conference), in Sumiswald, Switzerland. Every six years, Mennonites from throughout Europe, speaking at least five different languages, gather for worship, workshops and conversations. Many of the nearly 1,000 participants were sufficiently fluent in two or three of these languages to forgo the headsets that provided simultaneous translation into Dutch, French, English, German or Spanish. But others listened attentively to the electronically mediated interpretations, nodding, pondering or laughing just a half step behind the rest of the audience. Our singing sometimes included verses in all five languages, and conversations between sessions unfolded in a beautiful cacophony of blended idioms.

That our worship and conversations could go forward in spite of these linguistic limitations was made possible, in no small part, to the presence of gifted translators.

Similar linguistic dramas unfolded during several days of subsequent meetings, first with the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Council at St. Chrischona, near Basel, and then at a gathering of international Mennonite educators at nearby Bienenberg. In all these settings, people from many different countries gathered to share their convictions, concerns, ideas and dreams. We did so in the naïve hope that we were indeed part of the same body, despite the fact that at one of the most fundamental levels of human interaction—meaningful speech—we were often not able to communicate directly with each other.

That our worship and conversations could go forward in spite of these linguistic limitations was made possible, in no small part, to the presence of gifted translators. For hours on end, a team of translators provided nearly instantaneous interpretations to prepared speeches and spontaneous discussions, adjusting to new languages on the fly as speakers from various countries went to the microphone. Though usually hidden from sight in soundproof booths, the power of the translators was immediately obvious on those rare occasions when something went wrong and a whole wave of people suddenly put their hands to their headsets and looked around anxiously.

At such gatherings, translators offer the church a profound spiritual gift. They must listen with acute sensitivity and empathy, attending to the essential meaning of what is being said. And then, in an instant, they reformulate that meaning in a new idiom. On the one hand, as faithful messengers in the service of other people's words, translators are obliged to add nothing new to the message; yet without their capacity to reframe the message in words they invent, communication across linguistic groups becomes impossible. This gift of "double vision"— to enter empathetically into the reality of the speaker and then move graciously across the seemingly impermeable boundaries of speech and meaning into the new reality of the listener—is a small sign of the kingdom of God breaking into our world. It points to the miraculous possibility of unity even within the colorful variety of our cultural and linguistic diversity. It gives me hope that the vision of a global church, united by the koinonia of the Spirit, is a genuine possibility.

On the Sunday following the conclusion of the MWC meetings, the Christian church around the world celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Later that day, as we gathered for devotions, participants were invited to pray aloud in the language of their mother tongue—the language of their soul. One after another, prayers went up in languages my ear could not identify. Yet the shared tone of praise, vulnerability, supplication and intimacy with God was unmistakably familiar—a foretaste of the vision described in the Apocalypse of St. John (Revelation 7: 9-12) when people from every nation, tribe and language will be united around the throne of God in the offering up of their praise. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

The juvenilization of American Christianity

The June issue of *Christianity Today* devotes several articles to "The Juvenilization of the American Church." Thomas E. Bergler's long cover story, "When Are We Going to Grow Up?" presents a history of American Evangelicals reaching out to youth through organizations such as Youth for Christ and Young Life. He notes the success of this outreach but cautions about unintended consequences: "Juvenilization tends to create a self-centered, emotionally driven and intellectually empty faith."

Throughout its history, the Christian church has adapted the gospel message to its culture, with varying degrees of success. At the same time, such efforts have been criticized as either watering down the message or presenting a false one that doesn't adequately challenge people to follow Jesus.

White evangelicals, in particular, writes Bergler, found success in adapting the gospel message to the culture, especially to young people: "It fared equally well in the buttoned-down 1950s and the psychedelic 1960s."

Meanwhile, in the wider culture, the meaning of American adulthood underwent change. Instead of encouraging responsibility, self-denial and service to others, a new "psychological adulthood" encourages the individual's needs and wants above obligations and attachments to relationships.

He quotes sociologist James Côté, who says the seven deadly sins have been redefined: "pride has become self-esteem … lust has become sexuality … envy is now channeled into initiative and incentive … sloth has become leisure."

Bergler refers to the National Study of Youth and Religion by Christian Smith and other researchers, which found that the majority of American teenagers are inarticulate about religious matters. Smith labels their pattern of religious beliefs as Moralistic Therapeutive Deism. (Our cover story in this issue references this on page 14.)

This kind of adolescent narcissism, Bergler writes, has come to typify many Americans today: "God, faith and the church all exist to help me with my problems. Religious institutions are bad; only my personal relationship with Jesus matters."

In that same issue, several other writers respond to Bergler's article. John Ortberg, a megachurch pastor, mostly agrees with Bergler but calls the issue a missiological one of contextualization. He asks, How do we contextualize the gospel to a youth-worshiping culture?

He also notes that we need help defining just what spiritual maturity is.

David Kinnaman, a researcher and president of Barna Group, says we under- and overestimate the power and shape of the next generation. He notes that "typical parents are just as 'addicted' to media and technology as are their teenagers, just in different ways." He says they've interviewed teenagers who complain that their parents' use of technology inhibited quality family time.

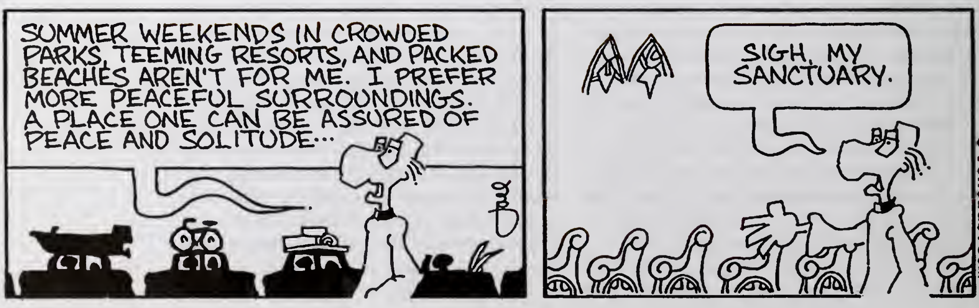
David Zahl, a cultural critic, agrees with Bergler's diagnosis but says "it misses the freedom at the heart of the gospel."

He makes the point that we don't grow out of spiritual adolescence by trying to grow up. "The Christian religion," he writes, "is not ultimately about the Christian, either adolescent or mature—it is about the Christ."

The question Bergler raises is an important one: Are we too immature? One of the better resources I've found in discussing spiritual maturity is Richard Rohr's book *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. He posits that we create an ego structure in the first half, then "fall upward" in the second half as we search for meaning.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


SUMMER WEEKENDS IN CROWDED PARKS, TEEMING RESORTS, AND PACKED BEACHES AREN'T FOR ME. I PREFER MORE PEACEFUL SURROUNDINGS. A PLACE ONE CAN BE ASSURED OF PEACE AND SOLITUDE…
SIGH, MY SANCTUARY.
© Pontius.com

—compiled by Gordon Houser

> “We’ve got to learn to view poor folks of color, who have been so demonized in recent decades, with the same level of compassion that we extend to people we perceive to be ‘like us.’”

—Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, in *The Christian Century*

Lowest divorce rates in the Northeast

A recent U.S. Census report shows the Northeast … has the lowest divorce rate in America. The Bible Belt, meanwhile, home to Southern hospitality, church telethons and country music, has more “shotgun” weddings and the most divorces.—*Religion News Service*

Native American women face rape, rare justice

One in three American Indian women have been raped or have experienced an attempted rape, according to the Justice Department. Their rate of sexual assault is more than twice the national average. And no place, women’s advocates say, is more dangerous than Alaska’s isolated villages, where there are no roads in or out, and where people are further cut off by undependable telephone, electrical and Internet service.

The issue of sexual assaults on American Indian women has become a major source of discord in the current debate between the White House and the House of Representatives over the latest reauthorization of the landmark Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

According to a survey by the Alaska Federation of Natives, the rate of sexual violence in rural villages is as much as 12 times the national rate. And interviews with Native American women here and across the nation’s tribal reservations suggest an even grimmer reality: They say few, if any, female relatives or close friends have escaped sexual violence.—*New York Times*

49 days
Time manufacturers claim it takes for “biodegradable” plastic bags to break down in salt water.

3 years
Time German researchers found it takes.
—*Pacific Standard*

Hidden hunger of the poor

Nutrition is getting new attention in the development industry. “Hidden hunger” is increasingly seen as a matter of nutritional deficiency, not only food supply. Having enough to eat does not translate automatically into good health if children lack adequate micronutrients. Malnourished children are less likely to go to school and perform poorly even if they do. *The Economist* says new attention to micronutrient deficiencies has a great payback rate. “The good news is that better nutrition can be a stunningly good investment. … Nothing else in development policy has such high returns on investment.”—*The Marketplace*

Numbers to ponder

- On average, percentage that violent crime is reduced in the United States for each additional year in school: **30**
- Amount the State of California spends per student per year: **$8,667**
- Amount the State of California spends per prisoner per year: **$50,000**
- March 2012 settlement to individuals and businesses harmed by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill: **$7.8 billion**
- BP profits in 2011: **$25.7 billion**
- Percentage increase in BP shares the day after the settlement: **2.3**

—Yes! Magazine

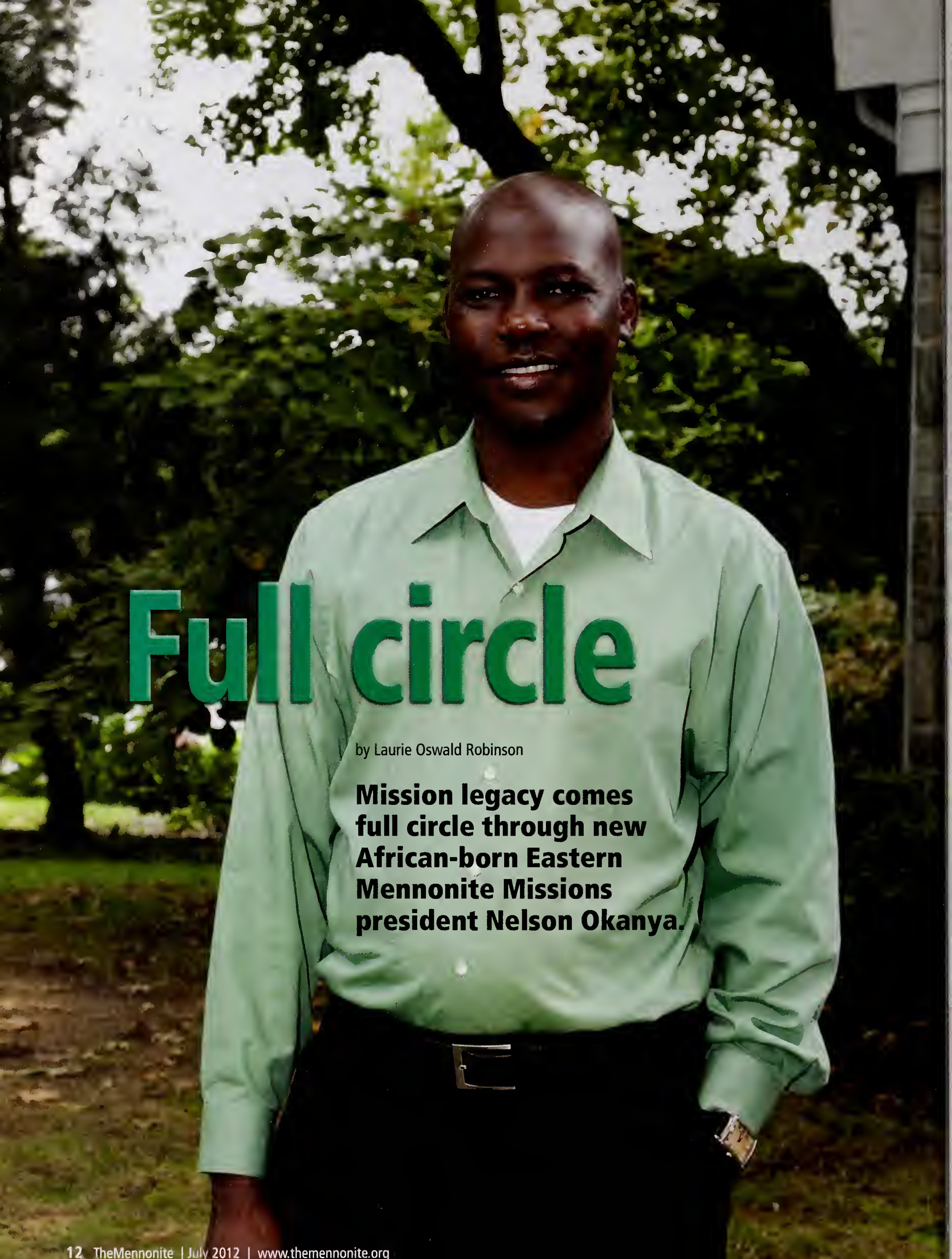
Bishops demand help for poor

A week after House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan claimed his Catholic faith inspired the Republicans’ cost-cutting budget plan, the nation’s Catholic bishops reiterated their demand that the federal budget protect the poor, and said the GOP measure “fails to meet these moral criteria.” That and other strongly worded judgments on the GOP budget proposal flew in a flurry of letters from leading bishops to the chairmen of key congressional committee.—*Religion News Service*

15 gadgets that children born now will not remember

1. **Wired home Internet**
2. **Dedicated camcorders and cameras**
3. **Landline phones**
4. **Slow-booting computers**
5. **Windowed operating systems**
6. **Hard drives**
7. **Movie theaters**
8. **The mouse**
9. **3D glasses**
10. **Remote controls**
11. **Desktops**
12. **Phone numbers**
13. **Prime-time television**
14. **Fax machines**
15. **Optical discs**

—yahoo.com



Full circle

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Mission legacy comes full circle through new African-born Eastern Mennonite Missions president Nelson Okanya.

When Nelson Okanya grew up in Kenya, he played with the children of the first mission workers from Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) to plant a Mennonite church among his people.

Today, Okanya, the first-born son of John and Mary Okanya who received from EMM's ministry, and his wife, Jessica, are raising their two small sons, Barak and Izak, in North America. It's where since October 2011 he has served in his new role as EMM president in Salunga, Pa., to help a new generation of Anabaptists join in sharing God's good news in Christ.

One day Barak and Izak will tell their own story of being part of a biracial and bicultural family who served God. The narrative will likely include how the family legacy of loving and serving Jesus is bearing fruit across generations and cultures because of EMM's faithfulness to Christ.

The sons may also share the joy of how EMM's ministry has come full circle through their father's ministry as EMM president. That ministry —which began after longtime EMM president Richard Showalter retired—has roots in the soil of his boyhood home in a rural western Kenyan village and in the city of Nairobi.

It's also ministry that 40-year-old Okanya—former pastor of the multiracial Capital Christian Fellowship in Lanham, M.D.—hopes will take root among believers who faithfully live as citizens of God's kingdom, which has no national boundaries. It's a kingdom Okanya believes today begins in one's backyard before spreading into other fields.

"It's a new day in missions, because the world is coming here to the doorstep of North America," Okanya says. "It's a day when North American-based mission agencies need to share the gospel with the influx of people from other cultures and religions who are being drawn to this country.

"North American mission agencies have spent the last 100 years learning how to do cross-cultural ministry. It's now time for these same mission agencies to share those tools with local congregations who are seeking to do the same kind of ministry at home."

Tending home fires first

Okanya, an Anabaptist from the global South who is leading a mission agency in the global North, symbolizes how 21st-century missions are simultaneously local and global in emphasis. Marrying his international perspective with a local focus requires he make tough decisions about how he will spend his time and mark his calendar.

Helping form his decision to focus on the home front to help build long-term sustainability for EMM was guidance he received from Lesslie Newbigin's book *The Open Secret*. Newbigin writes: "The traditional sending agencies have, in general, totally failed to recognize that the most urgent contemporary mission field is to be found in their own traditional heartlands and that the most aggressive paganism with which they have to engage is the ideology that now controls the 'developed world.' "

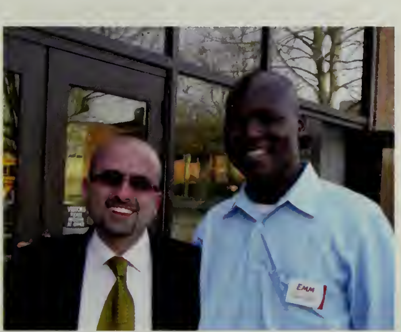
It's a new day in missions, because the world is coming here to the doorstep of North America.
—Nelson Okanya

Part of tending the home fires included meeting one on one with all 47 staff members. The meetings helped rebuild morale after a restructuring downsizing process cut about 25 percent of the staff.

"A new structure had been put into place, and because staff was dealing with the pain of seeing their colleagues leave, morale was low," he says. "By meeting one-on-one with people, I could be present to their sadness, their adjustment, their losses as well as their hopes and prayers for the future.

"I wanted to know them as people, not just as roles, and I wanted to hear their life stories and their journeys of understanding call. … I naively thought it would take 30 minutes each, but the shortest meeting lasted at least an hour."

Kaylene Derksen, EMM's development director, says Okanya's caring presence, engaging personality and intent to connect with local constituents has brought healing and encouragement.



Nelson with César García (left), general secretary of Mennonite World Conference. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Isak, Jessica, Nelson and Barak Okanya.
Photo by Jonathan Charles

When people feel cared about, they want to be connected. —Keith Weaver

She says he has also generated more work for the staff members who welcome the opportunity to partner with Okanya during his Sunday morning visits to local congregations. Okanya's calendar is filled up through April 2013 with local engagements.

"It feels really right that Nelson is here, because he symbolizes the completing of a circle for EMM's initial work in Kenya," Derksen says. "And he brings youthful energy and a young family. ... Occasionally when they are here, it feels so good to hear and see the children running down our halls in the office.

"He also has a renewed vision for serving our local constituency. ... Because he is social and connects easily with people as he visits local congregations throughout Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC), people are becoming generally more interested in EMM overall. ... When people feel cared about, they want to be connected."

It is the constituents' own passion for missions that Okanya is tapping, he says. The area conference gave birth to EMM and has always had a strong heartbeat for missions. He hopes to help them rekindle that intensity by encouraging each congregation to become a missional center.

His hopes are being realized, says Keith Weaver, moderator of LMC, who feels welcomed by Okanya in helping the conference renew its missional passion and vision. Much needed are missional forays into the multicultural world of refugees and immigrants who are making Lancaster County and the surrounding region their home. Also in the region are many unchurched North Americans who are searching for a place to belong and to find meaning.

"I am excited about how Nelson is building bridges to congregations and helping build a sense we are EMM and LMC together in this," Weaver says. "Nelson is passionately committed to spiritual renewal and well-being of LMC congregations. His passion and focus means so much to conference leaders and bishops."

As an example of this growing partnership, Okanya and the LMC bishop board recently met to discuss the increasing need to better develop the faith of children and young people who are being shaped by moralistic therapeutic deism, or MTD.

MTD is causing children and young people to develop a thin, feel-good faith that has lost its radical sense of sacrifice, discipline and biblical base that are part of being disciples of Jesus, Okanya says. He knows that sending agencies need disciples prepared to go.

"If our young people are not transformed according to the Judeo-Christian, biblical understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ [but] are shaped by MTD, then they won't be prepared to share the transforming message of Jesus with others," Okanya says.

Partnering, mentoring build strong foundation for local-global perspective

The connection between solidifying discipleship at home and fostering global missional vitality is not lost on Okanya. He is networking with other Anabaptist mission agencies—including Mennonite Mission Network, Virginia Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). One of the connections he has made in this first year is a new and supportive relationship with J. Ron Byler, executive director of MCC U.S.

"EMM's role has traditionally been different from MCC's, but Nelson and I, both relatively new in our roles, quickly learned that we shared a commitment to a holistic gospel, one in which witness and service are inseparable," Byler says.

"We made a commitment to support each other and to encourage our staff groups to do the same. I pray for Nelson regularly, and I know he does the same for me. I'm looking forward to our relationship growing and for ways EMM and MCC can deepen our collaboration."

Okanya believes his ability to form solid relationships and partnerships is the fruit of having had affirming mentors throughout his life's journey, including his parents, educators and mission leaders.

Okanya received a diploma in Christian ministries (counseling) from Daystar University in Nairobi. He later earned a master of divinity degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va. He is currently taking doctoral classes in moral theology from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

He also has had much practical experience, including being a participant and a leader in EMM's mission programs in his younger years, including YES and STAT in Kenya and other locations. Later on, he served as assistant director and director of the Baltimore YES training center.

In 2004, he also served on a one-year GO! assignment with Jessica at the Mennonite Theological Training College of Eastern Africa, where he was academic dean. In 2006, he served as associate pastor at Capital Christian Fellowship in Lanham, Md., and then as lead pastor until 2011, when he was called into his current EMM role.

One of his mentors was Richard Showalter, Okanya's predecessor, who was EMM president during Okanya's earlier years of EMM service. Showalter served during a season when the Anabaptist church was forging new partnerships with the global South. The planting of those seeds has most likely helped produce the fruit of receptivity toward Okanya's leadership.

"It is particularly appropriate that Nelson is from East Africa, because Tanzania was EMM's first international destination in 1934," Showalter says. "It is a wonderful gift from God that Nelson, being the kind of person he is, was available and was tapped to serve in this way.

"His appointment has sent a very important message: mission has become a joint effort of churches everywhere and not just a function of Western culture or Western churches. It is equally a function of southern churches as well. And Nelson coming to EMM is an honor to EMM and an appropriate expression of the confidence and partnership shared by the entire global church."

Saying yes to new ways of sharing the gospel story

Okanya knows how quickly the old paradigm of North and South, East and West, is changing into a global neighborhood. Because of a shrinking world, fed by new forms of media and social networking, the church faces unprecedented opportunities for communicating the gospel.

If we want new generations to be compelled to listen, then we must risk telling our story in new ways.—Nelson Okanya

At the same time, a growing pluralism of messages are threatening to drown out the biblical narrative. As his sons, Barak and Izak, and sons and daughters of Anabaptists worldwide are called to grasp the baton of faith and to run the race of making disciples everywhere, what must be forged is a fierce commitment to sharing the gospel in ways that can be heard by a noisy world.

"If we want new generations to be compelled to listen, then we must risk telling our story in new ways," he says. "There are all kinds of other groups and religions that are telling their story more effectively to younger generations.

"The gospel is competing with powerful narratives that have power to shape our culture through powerful media outlets, and the church is slow to leverage this technology to tell its story. ... Will we commit to live our story in ways that not only tell the story but also shape our world?"

That is the question Okanya has come to EMM to help answer with a resounding yes.

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

A biblical view

Christian patriots

by Harold E. Bauman

On the Sunday related to July 4, we can rethink what it means to be a Christian patriot. We can give thanks for the privileges we have. We can see what characterizes a Christian patriot. And we can ask, What guidance does the early church give us? ▶

I pledge allegiance
to Jesus Christ,
And to God's kingdom
for which he died—
One Spirit-led people
the world over, indivisible,
With love and justice for all.

—June Alliman Yoder and J. Nelson Kraybill

First, Christian patriots are clear about ultimate allegiance. In Acts 2:36, Peter states, 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." When the early Christian believers said, Jesus is Lord, this meant Caesar is not Lord. For this, many paid with their lives. Today in Colombia, Christians are dying for their confession that Jesus is Lord who brings peace.

Second, Christian patriots are to be submissive to their government, though their pledge of allegiance is always secondary to allegiance to Christ. In Romans 12:14 to 13:10, Paul is dealing with a problem regarding the relation of the believers in Rome to the Roman government.

In Romans 12:14-21, Paul writes in effect that we are to live compassionately with everyone; be at peace with all as far as it depends on you. We are not to repay anyone evil for evil but to overcome evil with good. Feed your enemy, give him something to drink. We are never to avenge ourselves; God will repay.

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul writes that everyone is to be subject to the governing authorities, for all authorities have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists authorities resists what God has appointed as God's servant for your good: to punish the bad and to reward those who do good. There are two motivations for being subject to government: One is to avoid punishment, and the second is to be subject for conscience sake to God-initiated authority.

In Romans 13:8-10, Paul writes that we are to owe no one anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

When the government asks a duty that one cannot do, then what? After World War II, the Allies prosecuted the Nazi leaders for war crimes in the Nuremberg War Trials. The Nazi leaders pled, "We obeyed orders." They were good Lutherans in this regard. Luther had taught that we are citizens of two spheres, the state and the church. We do what each asks of us, and they are separate. So they obeyed orders. The Allied prosecutors said, 'No, you should have obeyed your conscience, and you did not, so you will be convicted."

The other side of this approach is what happened to some Air Force pilots in the Vietnam War. Their consciences told them they could no longer fight in a war that they considered wrong. They made their case on the basis of the Nuremberg trials; their consciences would not allow them to fight. They were told, "No, you have been given orders; you obey them." Our government wanted it both ways.

For 300 years the early church was pacifist. The Church Fathers (leaders) spoke out against military service and killing, even though not all followed their teaching. When Maximilianus in North Africa decided to become a Christian in 299, he told his officer he wanted to resign from the army. He was given the choice of recanting his faith or death. The officer asked his father, who was a recruiter for the army, to change his son's mind. The father refused. His father, mother and sister encouraged him to stand firm, and he was killed. In the Catholic Church, his relics (bones) are under the altar in the basilica on the Notre Dame University campus.

Whatever duties Christian patriots accept from the government, these duties must fit in with the command to "love your neighbor as yourself."

For Christian patriots the pledge of allegiance has some limitations. The first amendment in the Bill of Rights gives us our freedom to worship as we choose as we confess our allegiance to God as the Highest One. Allegiance to the government is second. Also, the separation of church and state allows for freedom of conscience. Those who by reason of conscience object to military service are recognized by the Supreme Court and Congress with provisions for positive service for the welfare of the country.

So we are to give respect to those to whom respect is due and honor to whom honor is due. We can pledge allegiance to our government, subject to the government's limitations, which make it second to our allegiance to Christ.

Third, whatever duties Christian patriots accept from the government, these duties must fit in with the command to "love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus called this the second greatest commandment. To go to another country and call your neighbor your enemy does not make it right to kill him or her or civilians.

Some soldiers grew up with a conscience taught to love the neighbor and to do them no harm. Now they have an inner struggle: "I am killing people, and it is so wrong, regardless of the war hoopla." For some the struggle becomes so intense they commit suicide. Some soldiers can repress their experiences but never want to talk about them. Some returning soldiers, who have used violence to deal with whatever gets in their way, now begin using violence against their spouse. When they realize what they are doing to a loved one, this produces more conflict within them. Some commit suicide.

As a country, what have we placed upon our soldiers? It looks like much of the posttraumatic stress disorder is of our making. May God have mercy upon us and them.

Christian patriots live out their faith in God through the quality of their lives with integrity, honesty, compassion.

Fourth, Christian patriots are to pray for those in authority. In 1 Timothy 2:1-10, Paul writes that we are to pray for everyone, those who are considered the lowest, such as the homeless, as well as for all in our society, including the police and the soldiers. We are to pray for kings (mayors, governors, presidents, legislators) and all in high places. The purpose is that there may be peace and that the message of the good news will get out to everyone.

The burdened soldiers need the good news that there is one mediator between God and people, the man Christ Jesus. First, they need someone to listen to their pain and walk with them in it until they know you know their pain. Then we can say what we have found in the forgiveness and healing of Jesus. Then believe the Spirit will heal, however long it may take, and walk with them.

I wonder, without removing one ounce of personal responsibility from the people involved, whether the onslaught of sexual unfaithfulness among governmental leaders is partly due to Christians not praying for them and building walls of protection around them. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." Have we become more secular with our uncertainty whether there is a Satan and whether he battles Christians to do dishonor to the name of Christ. The battle is real, and it will take praying churches to win. We need to pray for protection for all, women and men, for sexual affairs seem so enticing, until afterward, when the costs roll in.

Fifth, it is the quality of life that sets Christian patriots apart. 1 Peter 2:11-12 calls its readers, who are named aliens and exiles, to abstain from their selfish desires that war against the soul. They are to conduct themselves honorably so that though they get maligned as evildoers, their honorable deeds will be seen so their accusers will glorify God when he comes to judge.

This calls to mind Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Any community of faith will have a few people who give a bad witness, but the issue is whether the community of faith as a whole are people of integrity, honesty and freely give service and compassion to the neighbor.

In summary, Christian patriots are clear that their highest allegiance is to God, not government, however Christian that government may appear. Christian patriots are to pledge allegiance to their government within the limitations provided by the government so that their pledge to it is second to their allegiance to God. Whether Christian patriots pledge allegiance or not, they are to submit to government according to their conscience, accepting whatever punishment when they disobey.

Christian patriots accept duties from their government that are helpful to their neighbor and do them no harm. Christian patriots give thanks for and pray for all of those in authority, including police and soldiers.

Christian patriots live out their faith in God through the quality of their lives with integrity, honesty, compassion. They freely give constructive service to their neighbors and their country and needy people in other countries. Their presence raises questions so they can share what they have found in their life in Jesus Christ in God's kingdom, which includes all Christian patriots in all nations with many forms of government. According to Peter, Christians are aliens and exiles in this world, with a different worldview, and are citizens of a new nation with Christians of all nations of the world. It is this nation, the kingdom of God, that receives the highest allegiance.

Harold E. Bauman formerly taught at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. This article is adapted from a sermon he preached at First United Church of Christ in Goshen, Ind.

For Baby Boomers such as myself (born in 1954), World War II was in the background during our formative years. It was the most destructive event, by far, in all of human history. However, we still don't really understand that war and its impact. We would do well to try to come to terms with what happened then, and its ongoing presence in our lives. As I reflect on World War II as a Christian, I find myself struggling to find hope. This struggle, perhaps paradoxically, leads me to the book of Revelation. Let me explain why. ▶

Who can stand against it?

by Ted Grimsrud

The 'good' war and the Beast of Revelation

I have several reasons for trying better to understand World War II.

I always encounter the long shadow of World War II in discussions with students. For many, the ideas of pacifism are new and foreign. Every semester I face the question, What about World War II? Doesn't it prove that war at times is necessary—and that pacifism is unrealistic?

No wonder students raise these questions. They have grown up with images of the "Good War." They hear our leaders, including President Obama, evoke the war against Hitler to show that the only way to pursue the right in extreme circumstances is by violent force.

This is what World War II was: 40,000 people killed every day for five years straight.

My father fought in the Pacific war. He lost his best friend there, a man named Ted. My parents met when my father was stationed in Oregon. My mother also served in the military as a recruiter. They did not glorify the war. But they clearly valued their experience, proud of having done their part. I find myself constantly conversing with them in my mind as I study the war.

The more I learn of World War II and its moral legacy in the United States, the more discouraged I feel (actually, "discouraged" may be way too mild a term; horrified, outraged, depressed or despairing might be better terms).

Joseph Stalin famously said that while a single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic. That says a great deal about World War II. It's so big that we can't wrap our heads around the numbers; so they just become statistics. But imagine that a meteorite hit one of our small Mennonite cities (say, Harrisonburg, Va., or Goshen, Ind.) and killed 40,000 people. This would be huge news. But then imagine that something like this happened every single day for five years. This is what World War II was: 40,000 people killed every day for five years straight.

And consider who it was that died due to this war. Four out of five of the deaths came to noncombatants—"innocent bystanders," if you will. Many lived in countries that weren't directly fighting the war. Three main belligerents (the United States, Britain and Japan), combined, had fewer deaths than Indonesia. Six times as many Indians died as Britons.

Maybe Americans could imagine this as a "good war" because, of the 60 million or so noncombatants who died, only 1,700 were Americans. Rather than having our nation physically devastated by the war, the U.S. countryside ended the war unscathed.

Though I am a pacifist, I find just war thought helpful in thinking about this war. World War II exerted such a tremendous cost; we must ask, was it worth it? Was it fought for just causes? Was it truly necessary? Then, if we are to think morally about all this, we must also ask, Was it fought justly? Were the means just?

These are big questions. The answers are complicated, existing in shades of gray, not obvious black and white. Still, none of the three reasons commonly given for why this war was "necessary" for the United States survives scrutiny: that we needed to go to war to protect our national autonomy against the threat of invasion, that we needed to go to war to protect democracy against tyranny or that we needed go to war to save the Jews.

About "just means": Historians still debate with vigor the military necessity and moral justifiability of our nuclear bombs dropped on Japan. But I don't think anyone could deny that their use utterly violated the moral criterion of noncombatant immunity.

So this war was terribly destructive. The given reasons for the necessity of American involvement are, when scrutinized, shaky. The means used in the war likely were crimes against humanity. And then there's this: I'm especially interested in how the war impacted the United States in the generation to follow.

A 'good' war?

Number of noncombatants killed: 60 million

Number of these who were American: 1,700

Percentage of deaths that were noncombatants: 80

The United States, Britain and Japan had fewer deaths than Indonesia.

Six times as many Indians died as Britons.

In the late 1930s, the American military was small, about the same as Turkey's. There was no Pentagon, no Defense Department, no independent Air Force, no Central Intelligence Agency and no nuclear weapons program. The United States was not a militaristic society and did not have the structures in place to become one. Due to World War II, these structures were created—and the past 70 years testify to their "effectiveness."

If we look objectively at World War II and its consequences, we may well decide that the enemies that mattered most in that war were violence and militarism—not the Germans or Japanese. The "spiritual forces" of coercive power emerged from the war victorious even as Germany and Japan went down in defeat. The "beast" in World War II may be seen, then, as the war system itself more than any particular nation-state.

Here I turn to the Book of Revelation for help. Revelation 13 gives us a vivid image of the spiritual power behind World War II and its violent legacy: "A beast rising out of the sea" with heads and horns and crowns: the epitome of militarist violence. "Who is like the beast, and who can stand against it?" Indeed, as we look at the last 70 years of American foreign policy from the perspective of peace, we can't help but ask this question. "All the inhabitants of the earth will worship it." The power of the sword reigns supreme.

The visions of Revelation 13 convey just how powerful the beast's story would be for John's first-century audience. There's a triple threat—the dragon, the beast and the false prophet—that shapes every element of reality. What matters is the power of the sword. John pictures the beast as blasphemous, oppressive and evil.

However, that's not how the Romans would have seen him. John's "beast" was their emperor. The Romans would have seen their great leader as the one who through "good" wars subdued their enemies and made their great prosperity and global prominence possible.

John's point here is to set up his punch line that comes in chapter 14. Yes, the beast and his minions seem overwhelming. Their portrayal of reality seems unassailable. War makes the world go around. Is it even possible to conceive of a counter-portrayal?

Maybe we could understand the challenge for John's audience like this. You know from Jesus the truthfulness of the way of peace, of love and compassion. But does that way have any real meaning in this world? Can it stand against the beast's way? It sure doesn't seem so.

But then we get to 14:1: "Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion!" Yes, there is a counter-story that does speak to the world that seems so in thrall to the beast. A key to this vision is the next image: "With him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads."

Who are these 144,000? Our answer will determine how relevant this counter vision to the beast's domination will be for us. The key to this number is found in Revelation 5 and 7. In both places, we have a single vision with two parts.

In chapter 5, John hears the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah," the one who can open the scroll. Then he sees a Lamb, standing as if it had been slaughtered. These are the same thing. The lion and lamb are one, a vision of complementary attributes.

The Romans would have seen their great leader as the one who through "good" wars subdued their enemies and made their great prosperity and global prominence possible.

Then, in chapter 7, John hears the number of those sealed by God, 144,000. But then he sees "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." Again, the same thing. The 144,000 and the great multitude are one, a vision of complementary attributes. These are all followers of the Lamb, throughout the world, throughout history.

Now in chapter 14, we see the 144,000 again. These are not a tiny remnant but a reminder of just how global the Lamb's followers actually are. John says, throughout the book that the way of the Lamb stands, victoriously, in resistance to the beast. They "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (14:4)—in resistance to the violence of the beast.

This vision inspires me not to accept that the story of World War II and its aftermath in the United States is all there is. In fact, there is another story, a story that exists alongside the story of the militarization of America.

During World War II, about 16 million Ameri-

Mennonite Church USA Archives – North Newton

cans took up arms, and a precious few said no. Twelve thousand legal conscientious objectors performed alternative service; 6,000 went to prison as draft resisters.

This tiny remnant kept alive a spark. Out of this spark, great things came in the years to follow. Social change movements for civil rights and nuclear disarmament gained inspiration, leadership and people power from those who opposed World War II. Service efforts by the American Friends Service Committee, Mennonite Central Committee and the Catholic Worker emerged from the war energized to expand their work. They did so in ways that have had profound impacts in the years since.

Those who said no to the "good war," small as their number may have been, witnessed to the Lamb's power.

These streams emerging from the World War II experience of pacifists reflect the truthfulness of John's vision in Revelation 14. It is possible to stand against the beast. You do so not by trying to match the beast's firepower with your own but by "following the Lamb." Those who said no to the "good war," small as their number may have been, witnessed to the Lamb's power. We see this power arise even in the face of the seemingly all-powerful story of redemptive violence that is generally taken to be World War II's moral legacy. This other moral legacy, one of genuine peace, can become history's final verdict on those terrible events that marked the 20th century.

Ted Grimsrud teaches at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

Untamed tiger

A look at Acts 4:32-35

by Jane Yoder-Short

While some Christians campaign for certain texts to be taken literally, few advocate the authoritative nature of the wild generosity reported on in Acts 4:32-35. We hear of this early group of believers owning nothing. They were selling land and houses and giving away the money. It sounds like utter craziness, especially if land was as pricey as today's prime agriculture ground. ▶

We can get a little nervous about this passage, and we may have good reasons. What if in a moment of passion we impulsively reach for our billfolds? What if we start feeling unnecessarily guilty over a shopping fling or for buying that new carpet?

What if people begin to think we support some fanatical economical reform?

Our impulse is to tame this text, to control the wild tiger kind of faith found in radical sharing. The church has a history of declawing this passage and others like it. The church has done and does all kinds of interpretive gymnastics.

The early church's economic sharing wasn't just a fluke event coming out of nowhere.

After Constantine legalized Christianity, it was understood that the sharing of goods was meant for a select few. The monks and nuns were to live exemplary lives. The rest of us are held to a different standard.

If you dust off the Wette's 1826 New Testament commentary, you read that Acts' author was speaking of willingness to share possessions. That sounds better. We are all willing to share in an abstract way. You don't really have to do it; you just have to be willing to do it.

Later in the 1800s, it was proposed that Acts was written with an overly optimistic view of the early church and so may not be entirely accurate. That sounds better; all the craziness was just propaganda about and by some new movement.

Of course, we remind ourselves that the early church was flawed in their belief that Jesus' return was imminent and thus who needs fields. Since we no longer expect Jesus to return tomorrow, it must be OK to keep worrying about our bills. It must be OK to keep taming these passages with yes buts. Yes, but we have children to feed. Yes, but there is the mortgage to pay. Yes, but we have retirement to think of.

All these taming strategies contain elements of truth. Is this enough to get us off the hook? And we haven't even mentioned the fact that first-century Palestine was a different culture. In our culture, faithfulness looks different.

Our culture is different, and this leads to confusion. Our ears become slanted, slanted by repeated proclamations that capitalism will save us, slanted by endless commercials flaunting that material abundance brings happiness, slanted by subtle individualism implying that self-fulfillment brings contentment.

American culture values material success. Life can become a competitive race, with each person for themselves. We end up feeling isolated. We long for community. Maybe this text has more to say to our world than we realize.

If we return to the early church's radical sharing and try not to tame it with our usual reactions, where do we end up? We begin to see that the early church's economic sharing wasn't just a fluke event coming out of nowhere. Sharing of wealth is tied to the life and teaching of Jesus and linked to the God of history who is the great equalizer.

Consider the numerous teachings of Jesus concerning possessions and sharing. Jesus told the rich ruler to sell all he had and distribute to the poor. He told his disciples not to lay up treasures where moths can get at them. Jesus told a story that revealed the folly of bigger barns. He also said you can't serve God and Mammon. Jesus had more to say about economic sharing than any other topic.

The extreme sharing described in Acts is also rooted in the generous God of Moses who freed the slaves and gave instructions to care for the alien, the widow and the destitute. This God introduced Jubilee and sent prophets to remind us of economic justice.

What we may have thought was a wild moment in history we see is tied to holy history. It's tied to a generous God who sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. It's tied to the life and teaching of Jesus.

But there is something more going on here. Acts says the whole group of believers was of one heart, sharing everything. This seems amazing considering the motley group of disciples of earlier days. This diverse group was tarnished by competition—remember the who-is-the-greatest argument? They were tarnished by betrayal—remember how they all fled after Jesus' arrest? They were tarnished by rejection—remember Peter declaring he never knew Jesus? This tarnished troublesome group is now of one heart. They own everything in common. What changed? It must have been more than self-discipline.

In John 20, we read that the scared disciples were huddled together in a locked room. Then the resurrected Jesus appeared and "breathed on them." The breath of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, transformed them from a scared diverse group to a unified group. The breath of Jesus unleashed the impossible. They became of one heart and one soul.

We see in this group that smelled of Jesus' breath, an impractical and impossible faith emerging. We see passionate care for others. We see the separation between the rich and the poor begin to dissolve.

Instead of raising red flags and getting nervous about what this passage may require of us, can we find ways to shout hallelujah? Let the breath of Jesus unleash on us the impossible.

As communities of faith we won't all look the same. We won't look like the group in Acts. A city church won't look like a rural church. A church here won't look like a church across the ocean. But we will all be living the impossible call of being Jesus in our world.

When it comes to individual matters of possessions and money, it is not easy. We will not all have the same response but at least can talk to each other about our use of money.

I recall being greeted at the door of a friend with an apology for her new carpet. This woman, who I admired for her graciousness and hospitality, was apologizing to me for buying a new carpet. I was surprised by her concern—had I said something that prompted this apology? We had a transforming conversation. We learned to understand our differences and our distinctive ways of letting the breath of Jesus inform our choices. After that I enjoyed her carpet on many occasions and so did a diverse group of people, both strangers and friends, both wealthy and poor and even some kids with dirty feet.

We don't need to apologize for our differences. We don't need to gossip about someone else's purchases. We do need to become more open and honest with each other.

When the breath of Jesus is unleashed, the impossible happens. We love those around us with new understanding; we love those with no carpet and those with plush carpet. We set off on the journey of becoming transformed people. As part of the transformation process we keep restacking our priorities to bring them in line with the Jesus we know and love. We keep restacking our priorities to move them beyond what our slanted ears hear, beyond our stock interests, beyond our material desires, beyond our narcissistic needs.

Following Jesus becomes complex in our global world with stark inequalities. How does it look to care about the needy when every seven seconds somewhere in the world a child under age 5 dies of hunger?

Acts 4 calls us to keep asking the hard questions. It keeps nudging us to imagine the impossible and live the impractical. It keeps us asking what wild generosity looks like.

The good news is that we are in this together. The breath of Jesus has already made us of one heart. We are not just one person against the cultural stream. We are part of a team that chooses to love those around us. This team chooses community over isolation and individualism. This team gives testimony to the life of Jesus. It is this untamed and wild faith that keeps life exciting.

We don't need to apologize for our differences. We don't need to gossip about someone else's purchases. We do need to become more open and honest with each other.

We fail and so did the early church. Later in Acts we hear that the Hellenist widows are being neglected. We fail, but that doesn't mean we dumb down the Jesus vision. We fail but still know who we are and where we are headed. We know we are part of something bigger.

The untamed tiger of the early church story keeps reminding us that we are part of a people where social classes are becoming irrelevant. It keeps reminding us that love is more important than success. May the passion of the early church continue to inspire us.

Jane Yoder-Short attends West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, Iowa. This article is adapted from a sermon she preached at First Mennonite Church in Iowa City, Iowa.

Todd M. Wimmer | 2012 TM photo contest entry

Simplistic gospel

by Clarence Rempel

"To win this game we have to get the ball inside. Drive the lane, take it to the basket." Simplifying the game of basketball for the moment at hand can be helpful, but most of us know the game is much more complex, with both offense and defense needing to be played well. ▶

Jesus is more than just a savior or an example.

"The key to raising healthy children is giving them age-appropriate chores that contribute to the well-being of the whole family." If only it were that simple.

The tendency to simplify has also impacted us in the spiritual realm and to our detriment. We have this inclination to simplify the gospel, the good news of God's global redeeming, reconciling, restoring work in the world.

One common version of the simplified gospel focuses on receiving forgiveness for one's sins and being prepared to meet the Lord. "Jesus was born to be your Savior and die for your sins. Believe in Jesus, and you will be ready for heaven."

Another common version of the simplified gospel focuses on Jesus as our example for how God wants us to live here on earth. "Imitate Jesus and be fulfilled."

There is a measure of gospel or good news in each of these salvation paradigms, but by themselves they are so minimalist that they can easily become distortions of the truth. One is too heavenly to be of earthly consequence, the other too earthly to be of eternal significance. The first focuses on Jesus' death as the saving event and overlooks the example of Jesus' life; the other focuses on Jesus' life and minimizes the salvific significance of Jesus' death. And both tend to miss the full redemptive significance of Jesus' resurrection. Read the gospel sermons of Acts and be surprised by the proclamation of salvation by resurrection.

The good news of Jesus begins with multiple assertions by angels, elders and prophets that Jesus is the fulfillment of all priestly instructions and all prophetic visions of the Old Testament. Jesus is the righteous, peacemaking Messiah King ushering in the fullness of God's rule on earth as it is in heaven.

When we receive Jesus Christ as our life example, we are saved:

- from sin-generated brokenness to life-restoring healing,
- from rule-keeping exclusion to grace-filled inclusion,
- from violent self-protection to innovative peacemaking,
- from fear-filled hoarding to a life of serving others.

When we receive Jesus Christ in his sacrificial death, we are saved:

- from being outside the people of God to being included in the family of God,
- from being guilty and shamed before God to being forgiven and honored as God's ambassador,
- from the fear of death and the powers of evil to faith in God's protection and provision.

We want to follow hard after Jesus—the Jesus who lived, died and rose again for our salvation and for the restoration of creation and culture.

When we receive Jesus Christ as our resurrected Lord, we are saved:

- from sexual addictions to sexual chastity and marital fidelity,
- from consumerist addictions to committed giving and generous sharing,
- from mindless pollution to conscientious creation care.

We want to claim all of Jesus and experience all of Jesus' gift of salvation. We want to proclaim and live all of the good news. We want to follow hard after Jesus—the Jesus who lived, died and rose again for our salvation and for the restoration of creation and culture. Jesus is Lord of all.

Clarence Rempel is conference minister for Western District Conference. For further reading along these ideas see The King Jesus Gospel *by Scot McKnight and* Simply Jesus by N. T. Wright.

Never again

A Canadian veteran commits to peacemaking.

by Jake Buhler

May 14, 194
August
Sept. 9

Fred Ritchie was a tank commander in Italy during World War II. Tall at 6'3", he answered the call of the Canadian Armed Forces, believing he was responding patriotically to a cause that would wipe out evil.

"There was pressure on us to enlist," he said in a talk in Saskatchewan a few years ago. "We were made to feel guilty if we did not join up." After the war, Fred became active in the Canadian Legion to spread the slogan, "Never again." ▶

"That has all changed," he says. "No more does anyone say, 'Never again.' We old vets are now used as propaganda to advance a new kind of Canadian patriotism that promotes the military."

Fred belongs to a group called VANA (Veterans Against Nuclear Arms). When Fred attends a Remembrance Day ceremony, he wears a white beret to indicate his allegiance to the path of peace. "For this," he says, "I have been criticized."

Charlie Clark, who grew up in the United Church tradition, listened carefully to the stories of his beloved Grandpa Ritchie on his fruit orchard in Naramata, British Columbia. The stories came from a gentle man who had seen war up close and who believed there was a better way to solving problems.

After taking some courses at the Justice Institute of British Columbia, Charlie searched for more places to pursue peace alternatives. He enrolled at Menno Simons College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and studied conflict resolution. While there, he came across Mediation Services of Winnipeg. He took a position there as a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer and spent two years learning about and teaching conflict resolution strategies. It was there that he crossed paths with another MCC volunteer, Sarah Buhler, who was the coordinator of the Inner City Program in downtown Winnipeg.

Sarah had grown up in Thailand and was a recent graduate of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, now Canadian Mennonite University. They met in a downtown church. Her concern was for a homeless person who needed a pair of large shoes. Judging Charlie's feet to be about the same as her homeless friend, she asked Charlie what size shoes he wore. This strange introduction was a bit more than Charlie could take. They met for coffee, and the rest is history.

Today Charlie Clark is a City Councilor in Saskatoon. In November 2010, Charlie chose to wear the MCC peace button, "To remember is to work for peace," at a public council meeting. His two sons, Simon, 6, and Benjamin, 3, are surrounded by friends who play with toy guns.

"Guns are bad," says Simon, who is a first grader. Ben is still finding his way, explaining a crude Lego pistol that he made: "This isn't a gun," he says, "it's a laser that shoots only good things."

If Charlie came to his peace position with a fine role model, Sarah was influenced by the well-known story of her great, great aunt "Taunte Liese" (Elizabeth Unger Buhler), who stood up to the terror of the dreaded Russian bandit Makhnov. In 1919, in the midst of a raid on her family in the village of Grigorjewka, with the women huddled in one corner of the Grote Schtov (large living room), 20-year-old Liese glanced unwittingly at the Kommandant. For a second he noticed the glance. Then fearlessly she took her guitar and sang folksongs and hymns. The Kommandant was so moved that he ordered his posse out of the village.

Fred Ritchie also met his enemy. In a lull from the fighting, he dismounted from his tank and sought refuge in a depression. Unbeknown to him, a German Nazi had chosen the same refuge. As Fred rounded an obstruction, he came face to face with his enemy. "For a frozen second," he told Charlie, "our eyes met. Each of us knew that the other had a sidearm. And then as quickly as we had met, we walked past each other. I think of that young teenager from time to time and wonder what would have happened if we had done what we were trained to do. One of us would be dead."

It is fitting that those who died are remembered. Soldiers and those they killed should all be remembered. And their families. And the names of conscientious objectors should also be remembered.

Fearlessly she took her guitar and sang folksongs and hymns. The Kommandant was so moved that he ordered his posse out of the village.

As 94-year-old veteran Fred Ritchie says, "Never again."

Fred Ritchie lives in retirement in Penticton, British Columbia. Sarah is a professor of law at the University of Saskatchewan. Sarah and Charlie have a third child, a 10-month-old daughter, Rachel. They are active in Osler Mennonite Church.

Jake Buhler is a member of Osler Mennonite Church.

Fred Ritchie reads a peace book to great-grandson Simon Clark. Photo provided

Menno warrior

Glen Alexander Guyton is director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA and pastors a church plant with Cyndi, his wife, in San Antonio, Texas.

As I stood on the deck of the now retired USS Lexington in the bay of Corpus Christi, Texas, with my 10-year-old son, I was in awe of the power and human ingenuity that this World War II-era Essex-class aircraft carrier represented. At the same time, my gut wrenched as I thought about its former mission; the Blue Ghost, as the USS Lexington was called by the Japanese, was meant to demoralize the Japanese. The aircraft carrier is a prodigious show of force of the U.S. military, which I used to be part of. Now, as I stood on the deck with the wind and salt water blowing in my face, I faced a dilemma: How would I explain all this to my son?

I am a true Anabaptist. Truer than I ever thought I'd be. After running into men such as Bishop Leslie Francisco III and Titus Peachey and learning about the former Mennonite Church, I was rebaptized as an adult and eventually left the military as a conscientious objector. But I was a trained airman, a military officer. I knew more about the art of war than the art of peace. While some were drilled in Scriptures from the Sermon on the Mount, I was drilled in quotes to justify war, such as this one from John Stuart Mills: "War is an ugly thing but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

So here I stood, some 18 years after finding the Mennonites, realizing that I am compelled to teach my son a Third Way. I have to share with him the truth and consequences of war and what happens when metal and fire rip through flesh. I have to share with him that while both Lee Greenwood and I are "proud to be an American," God does not bless only the USA; the peace of God can reign in Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan as well. I have to share with him that people across the pond love their families just as much as we do and that after the military bombardment stops, after the planes have all been grounded and after the troops have all gone home, someone still has to work at bringing peace and order to the destruction that is left behind. War has many victims, on both ends of the spear.

What is the leadership lesson here, other than the obvious lesson of teaching faith to our children? The lesson I learned is that something wonderful and humbling occurs when your faith comes to life, when as a leader what you have been preaching begins to intersect with how you are living.

> Something wonderful and humbling occurs when your faith comes to life, when as a leader what you have been preaching begins to intersect with how you are living.

"So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world" (1 Peter 1:6-7, NLT).

Seeing the world through the eyes of my children has helped me be true to my faith. Now, more than ever, my life is my witness, and I have to help my children filter the messages and propaganda of this world through a different lens. I can be open and honest with my son and let him know that while I have been shaped and molded by Anabaptist theology and am true to the theology of peace, I am still on the journey. Yet I know that Anabaptism is a legacy/heritage I can pass on to my children, no matter what our last name or genealogy may be. Anyone can learn to fight for peace. TM

Let's engage *Love Wins* wisely

It is hard to believe that followers of Jesus would object to a book entitled *Love Wins*. Yet in September 2011 a book by that title, written by pastor Rob Bell, stirred up many objections. The objections came in the form of a charge that Bell is a universalist. By universalist, his critics meant that Bell believes there is no hell and that all people will be in heaven.

Last October, Gerald J. Mast made brief mention of Bell's book in his article "True Evangelical Faith and the Gospel of Peace." In that same issue, Everett J. Thomas wrote a brief review of the book suggesting it would be "particularly helpful for young adults and others who are jaded by Christian expressions that seem judgmental and unloving." By December, the Letters section of *The Mennonite* evidenced that there are objections to this book in Mennonite circles as well.

As an Anabaptist, the reaction to Bell has led me to further reflect on what it means to discern together what the Scriptures teach. I'm also concerned about how that takes place and what the role of civility is when engaging works and authors we may not agree with.

As Anabaptists, whether we agree or disagree, we can at least applaud the courage it takes to publicly speak against dominant theological positions. Our own way of following Jesus was forged by courageous men and women who refused to remain silent when the Spirit compelled them to speak. Their understanding of the Scriptures, and the practice of their beliefs was considered heretical by the orthodoxy of their era.

At the same time, it's important to represent authors accurately. Rob Bell has been asked directly if he is a universalist and has responded that he is not. In *Love Wins*, he affirms a literal heaven and a literal hell, both populated with human souls. He also articulates that where a person spends eternity is a result of human choice to accept or reject the free offer of salvation, by the grace of God through faith in Jesus. He defines God's wrath and judgment in orthodox ways.

That said, Bell does push the theological envelope. He asks hard questions about biblical texts. What does Jesus mean when he says the gates of hell will not prevail against the kingdom of God? What does Philippians 2 mean when it says that every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord? How do we understand that in light of the Bible's teaching that no one can confess "Jesus is Lord" unless the Spirit is in them? Does that mean there are people in hell bowing their knee and confessing with their tongues that Jesus is Lord under the power of the Spirit? What do we do with Paul's contention in Ephesians 1 that God's plan and purpose all along is to gather all things under the lordship of Jesus? What does it mean to say that death has lost its sting? What does Revelation 21 mean when it says the gates of the New Jerusalem are never closed? Anyone who wants to consider seriously the whole counsel of God and correctly handle the word of truth should be interested in these questions.

Another way Bell pushes the theological envelope concerns post-mortem conversion. Can a person choose Jesus after they die? This has been answered in various ways throughout history, most recently in the book *If Grace is True* by Phillip Gully and James Mulholland. The big question is this: Does God have the power to save people after they die? If God cannot save people post-mortem, then in what sense has death lost its sting? How does the Bible answer that question?

These are important questions. The answers impact our theology, which springs from our understanding of Scripture. They also impact the way we engage others as missional communities and the message we carry into the world. If the response of the faith community is to shoot arrows at anyone who raises these questions, then we aren't discerning together what the Bible means, we are doing something else.

Fear of ideas that are new, make us uncomfortable or challenge previously held orthodoxies is unhealthy. Accepting those same ideas without critical engagement is also unhealthy. A better response is to engage such ideas together. I read *Love Wins* with three other pastors. With Rob's book in one hand and the Scriptures in another, we discerned, together, what was wheat and what was chaff. That seems best to me.

As missional faith communities, following after the way of Jesus, how we respond to works like Bell's says a lot about the God we follow, the Jesus we love and the Spirit that empowers our witness. May we be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. TM

Michael Danner is lead pastor of Metamora (Ill.) Mennonite Church.

Fear of ideas that are new, make us uncomfortable or challenge previously held orthodoxies is unhealthy.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Kraybill is Mennonite World Conference president-elect

General Council gives conditional approval for Assembly 2021 in Indonesia.

Church leaders pray for J. Nelson Kraybill, new president-elect of Mennonite World Conference. From left are Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, MWC president; Kraybill; Ervin Stutzman, Mennonite Church USA executive director; and Janet Plenert of Canada, MWC vice president.

It took three impromptu songs to count the ballots and confirm the results, but Anabaptist leaders from around the world elected J. Nelson Kraybill president-elect of Mennonite World Conference at MWC General Council meetings May 20-27 in Basel, Switzerland.

Kraybill is a pastor at Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., and was president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart from 1996 to 2008. He will replace president Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe in three years at Assembly 16 in Harrisburg, Pa.

"We almost had a tie, but we do have a simple majority," Ndlovu said of the choice between Kraybill and Markus Rediger of Switzerland.

> The most important thing we do as Mennonite people is worship and call people together into a relationship with Jesus.—Nelson Kraybill

It is the first time a president-elect has come from outside General Council membership. The MWC constitution had been modified at a previous meeting to allow a wider field of candidates. Though not a delegate, Kraybill was involved in crafting MWC's Shared Convictions document.

"I can sense in just the short time I've been with you this has been a worshipful time together," said Kraybill, who arrived in Europe only a couple of hours before the election.

"I think the most important thing we do as Mennonite people is worship and call people together into a relationship with Jesus Christ."

Members of the executive committee and the North American delegation offered prayers of support for Kraybill and thanks for two strong candidates. After the prayers concluded, Rediger made his way up to the stage, where the two shared an embrace to thunderous applause.

Much of the continental caucus and delegate sessions were dedicated to discussion of proposed "fair-share amounts" MWC members and associate members are asked to financially contribute from 2013 to 2015.

The amounts are based on church membership and each country's per capita gross national product. For example, Mennonite Church USA is one of the larger churches, with 103,245 members, and the United States has the highest per capita GNP with $41,557. Based on MWC's 2013-15 needs of $2.98 million, MC USA's fair share is 33.75 percent, or $1.008 million. Mennonite Church Canada's fair share is 8.67 percent. The U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches' share is 11.6 percent, and the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches' share is 9.13 percent. Those and other North American members' shares total 78.67 percent of MWC's requested income.

Most other fair-share percentages are at or far below 1 percent. MWC tends to receive less than half the fair-share amounts it requests. Many delegates expressed reservations about meeting the expectation. The proposed amounts were only approved with the inclusion of the possibility for negotiations about individual member's obligations.

"We recognize that the formula used is not a perfect formula," said MWC chief operating officer, Len Rempel of Canada. "Using one number for a whole country—we recognize that is not the most accurate approach."

Janet Plenert, MWC vice president, agreed that conditions can vary from region to region in a country and hoped some members recognized an ability to negotiate a higher contribution. She also noted widespread desire for a new formula system.

Departing from traditional procedure, General Council delegates conditionally accepted an invitation from the Asian caucus to host Assembly 17 in Indonesia in 2021. The Indonesian churches asked nine years early—instead of six—to help with their preparations. An official decision is contingent upon a feasibility study looking at travel, facilities and infrastructure. The General Council meets every three years. The Basel meetings drew 207 participants from 48 countries.—*Tim Huber for Meetinghouse, an association of Mennonite periodicals*

MWC looks for clarity about Anabaptist vision

But there won't be changes to seven Shared Convictions adopted in 2006.

In three presentations at the Mennonite World Conference General Council meetings May 20-27 in Basel, Switzerland, theologians and historians revisited the Anabaptist vision in a global context and sought input from meeting participants.

Growing out of conversations at Assembly 16 in Asunción, Paraguay, in 2009, the series of three papers seeks to respond to a call for clarity about what it means for MWC's member churches to live in the Anabaptist tradition.

MWC's Faith and Life Commission appointed Goshen (Ind.) College history professor John Roth project secretary. Pointing out the significance of meeting in Switzerland, home to five centuries of Anabaptist tradition, Roth said the documents are not meant to replace the Shared Convictions, a set of seven foundational tenets adopted by the MWC General Council in 2006.

"We share much with the broader Christian church, but every group has a particular lens through which [it] understands [its] identity," he said. "This is helpful for us to understand how we occupy our corner of God's kingdom."

In his piece on holistic vision, Paraguayan theologian Alfred Neufeld offered theological grounds for MWC's four commissions—Peace, Mission, Faith and Life, and Deacons.

One image that has grown out of this paper is how the four commissions work together like the chambers of a heart, beating together, each performing an important role for the living body.

Swiss seminary professor Hanspeter Jecker's paper on Anabaptist tradition faced the challenge of condensing 500 years of history into three pages.

He gave special focus to a section on weaknesses and deficits, which he connected to the concept of the back of a coin. "Often strengths and weaknesses are related to each other; that's why I like this expression," he said.

We are chained together, and we have to learn to walk together.—Tom Yoder Neufeld

While some groups have historically emphasized retreating from the world, "others would stress that we are in the world and go into 'overconformity,'" he said.

Neufeld and Jecker had previously gathered input at MWC executive committee meetings in Taipei in May 2011.

Tom Yoder Neufeld, a professor at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, and a member of the Faith and Life Commission, presented the third paper, "Koinonia—The Gift We Hold Together."

The document looks at the biblical basis of community, a strong component of Anabaptist identity.

Among the many images of community found in Scripture, Neufeld highlighted the community that happens when Christians join in communion with the divine Trinity.

"Don't look up at the dome or onto the image on the screen," he said of searching for Jesus in worship. "Look around, because he is within us. … He stands among us and proclaims to God, 'Here I am, and here are the children you have given me.'"

Other concepts included giving and receiving, partnerships and solidarity.

"Paul understood koinonia as we having this vision of being chained together, in chains of peace," Neufeld said.

"When Christ takes us and chains us to each other, we are tall and short, we are fast and slow, we are impatient and meek, and … we are chained together, and we have to learn to walk together."

The documents will continue through more revisions before coming back to the Faith and Life Commission for further polishing.—*Tim Huber, associate editor of* Mennonite World Review, *for Meetinghouse*

LES MENNONITES
DE LA RDC
SONT RECONNAISSANTS
A
LARRY MILLER

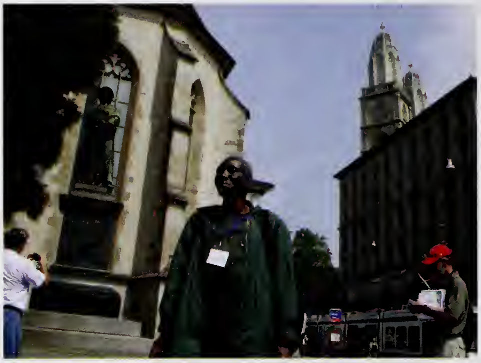
James Krabill

Thobekile Ncube of Zimbabwe and Larry Miller, general secretary emeritus of Mennonite World Conference, hold a quilt that was given to Miller at the MWC General Council meeting. Every delegate brought a piece of fabric, and in three days the pieces were assembled. Mennonite World Conference delegates affirmed the executive committee's decision to confer the title of general secretary emeritus on Larry Miller, who served as general secretary from 1990 until the end of 2011.

Swiss Anabaptist history still powerful

Leaders from Global South trace martyr footsteps in Zurich.

Tim Huber



Thioro Bananzoro of Burkina Faso stands by a statue of militant Reformed Church leader Ulrich Zwingli in front of the Wasserkirche (Water Church) in Zurich, Switzerland. Zwingli's Grossmünster cathedral is in the background.

Walking along the bank of the Limmat River in Zurich, Switzerland, Thioro Bananzoro pondered the challenges Anabaptists have turned into opportunities over the last five centuries.

Pausing by the statue of militant Reformed Church leader Ulrich Zwingli on a tour of Zurich during Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Council meetings in May, the delegate from the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso noted that how a Christian responds to trials can have longlasting effects.

His own experience started in his Muslim family. The oldest of 23 children, he suffered for 17 years after he became a Christian because his father did not consider Christians pure.

Hanspeter Jecker, Bienenberg Seminary history professor and tour leader, noted a tension that has accompanied Anabaptists around the world in their interactions with neighbors or the state since Anabaptism started in 1525. Does one be radical and leave or stay and work for local change? Bananzoro stayed and worked for change in a different way from Zwingli, whose statue depicts him with a Bible and a sword, representing his death in battle.

"My dad even totally changed his mind," Bananzoro said. "What he noticed from me was totally different from what he thought about Christians."

Though Bananzoro's father is still Muslim, 10 of the 23 children are now Christians.

"My father says to his children, 'If you cannot be a good Muslim, follow your older brother,' " Bananzoro said.

On working to bring people to reconciliation in his West African context, Bananzoro said a Christian should be a witness because people trust what they see more than what they hear.

"People can really persecute you," he said. "If you don't fight back—even if you don't succeed—people will understand and say your God is powerful. This is why we should not fight back."

Most of the 175 MWC meeting participants who took part in tours had never been to Switzerland before. Walking in the footsteps of early Anabaptists in places such as Schleitheim and the secret "Anabaptist cave" tucked behind a waterfall near Baritswil was a powerful experience.

The outing was of significant value to Ambroise Kabeya Kanda Mwanda of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"It is a big discovery to be here, to get to know my origin of Anabaptism," he said while standing on the present bridge at the location where authorities read Felix Manz's death sentence—the penalty for performing renegade adult baptisms.

Francisco Martínez, president of the Brethren in Christ Church in Cuba, reflected on the relationship of his church to early Anabaptists and a heavy-handed government after visiting Zurich and Schleitheim.

Schleitheim is where Michael Sattler led the first Anabaptist assembly on Feb. 24, 1527, resulting in the Schleitheim Confession, a watershed document articulating a distinctly Anabaptist confession of faith. Sattler was executed a few months later in May.

"To be in Switzerland is to continue the legacy that Christ planted and sowed in the hearts of a group of people who became martyrs for following the teachings of Jesus," Martínez said. "It feels like a privilege to walk freely in these streets where there were men and women who confessed the same faith we do and suffered oppression because of it."

He knows a bit about that. Missionaries brought Christianity to Cuba, but after the communist revolution, pastors and church leaders were mistreated and forced to do hard labor.

"Intelligent, wise Christians were not able to complete higher education and be appointed to jobs for which they were qualified," Martínez said. "Our situation has been improving since the 1980s, though there are still restrictions."

Nearly half a millennium has passed since the first Anabaptists took new steps of faith in Switzerland's hills and valleys. While the lives of the European founders remain in the past, their spirit continues today around the world.
—Tim Huber for Meetinghouse

Lancaster, Pa., pilgrims visit Israel

Tantur Ecumenical Institute overlooks Hebron Road, wall and checkpoint.

Hebron Road is one of the major thoroughfares leading south from Jerusalem toward Bethlehem. Setting on a hilltop overlooking the Hebron Road and the massive wall and checkpoint is the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, a Christian center dedicated to being a place for Christians to be in conversation and to also be in dialogue with Jews and Muslims. Tantur is Arabic for "hilltop."

From April 17-27, a group of 10 Mennonites from Lancaster, Pa., spent a week living and working at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. They were there for a time of service, learning and worship. The group was lead by Joe Miller, pastor of Mellinger Mennonite Church.

The Mennonite group was eager to join in Tantur's unique and wonderful ministry in the Holy Land as a center for shared life together in study and dialogue between Christians and those with other monotheistic faiths.

One example of the shared community life at Tantur is that the Lancaster pilgrim group was able to share in the community's common life no matter one's status. At shared meals with pastors, church workers, professors—even the dean of a major cathedral in England—everyone's status was a fellow pilgrim.

As the dean of the cathedral remarked at lunch one day, "We have all … laid aside our robes and clerical collars for polo shirts while we are at Tantur."

Tantur also serves as one of the few trusted venues in the Holy Land for dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims. The vision for Tantur was first conceived during a visit to the Holy Lands by Pope Paul VI, who commissioned the University of Notre Dame to administer the Tantur program of study, research and retreat. The current rector of Tantur is Timothy Lowe, an Orthodox priest.

"Tantur began as a work of faith and a labor of love," Lowe said. "No one could have envisioned the past 40 years of political, religious and social struggle in Jerusalem and the Middle East. Because of its location, Tantur has often been in the eye of the storm. What was supposed to be a laboratory of advanced theological study … often became a haven and oasis for those embroiled in the turmoil."

According to Lowe, the spiritual roots of Tantur were set when, in 1963, Pope Paul VI sent a handwritten letter to Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople asking for a meeting. It was the first formal contact between the church of the west and east in 400 years.

The two church leaders met on the Mount of Olives and embraced each other in brotherly affection. The Patriarch, when asked by the media why he was in Jerusalem.

Joe Miller

Mellinger Mennonite Church members (left to right) Julie Zimmerman, Mary Alice Sauder and Doris Nolt clean a courtyard at the Tantur Ecumenical Center in Israel in April.

"To say good morning to my beloved brother the Pope. You have to remember that it is 500 years since we have spoken to each other," the Patriacrch is reported to have said.

Mennonites have a long history of being a part of the Tantur community. John Howard Yoder, the preeminent Mennonite theologian of the 20th century, spent a year at Tantur in 1975-76. Numerous other Mennonite professors and pastors have been a part of the Tantur community since the 1970s.

Most notably, Calvin and Marie Shenk served under a joint assignment with Mennonite Mission Board, Mennonite Central Committee and Eastern Mennonite Missions from 1994-2001 and lived at Tantur. The Shenks were asked by their sending organizations to be an Anabaptist presence in Israel and Palestine and especially to seek conversations with the Jewish community of Israel.

During the years before the massive current wall and checkpoint, Tantur's walls around their olive groves were literally the border between Israel and the Palestinian West Bank. During those years, many Palestinians worked in Israel as day laborers. They would walk through the grounds of Tantur, slip into Israel and into Jerusalem for work, then return through the grounds in the late afternoon on their way home.

Under enormous financial difficulty, Palestinians felt compelled to find work in Jerusalem and risk the daily journey through what they called Tantur's "door of mercy," which allowed them to keep their jobs in Israel.—*Mellinger Mennonite Church, adapted by Anna Groff*

Businesses in Paraguay use chaplains

24 full-time and 26 part-time serve 44 businesses, one with 1,900 employees.

Hildi Amstutz

Paul Amstutz, left, a Mennonite Mission Network associate, mentors Juan Santander, a business chaplain in Paraguay.

God is in charge of a new way of doing business in Paraguay. For the last 20 years, C. Paul Amstutz, a Mennonite Mission Network associate living in Paraguay, has developed a cadre of trained business chaplains whose mission is clear: to show God's love in the workplace. There are now 24 full-time and 26 part-time chaplains serving 44 businesses—the largest one with more than 1,900 employees.

In 1991, a small group of Paraguayan Mennonite business owners called Amstutz to create the chaplaincy program, called Capellanía Empresarial (Business Chaplaincy).

According to Amstutz, the businessmen were looking for ways to reach their unchurched employees but didn't think it was appropriate for people in supervisory situations to proselytize.

The chaplains reach employees through weekly devotionals, relationship-building seminars, home visits, and in-house Christian libraries and DVD lending services.

Chaplains have reported intervening in crisis situations, counseling employees on sexual boundaries and even performing exorcisms while at work. On a more routine basis, chaplains try to greet each employee at least briefly once a week to build trust and provide spiritual nourishment.

"The goal is to reach people and get them in touch with Christ and in relationship with Christ," Amstutz says, "plus getting them connected to church to become disciples."

The chaplain may be the only pastor an employee ever knows, though many Christian employees appreciate having an on-site pastor as well as one in their congregation.

"Several Christian employees have told me, 'You're my second pastor,' " says Amstutz, who now spends half his time mentoring other chaplains and half as a chaplain for a local business. "Some say, 'You're my pastor, and my pastor on Sunday is my second pastor, because we see each other more often at work than at church.' We complement each other."

Employees report gratitude from having a space at work where they can worship and support each other in prayer. In one written testimony, employees of a particular business said, "We need this time to share our faith together. We wish the devotionals were every day."

Amstutz says that over the last 20 years there has been a significant improvement in ethical behavior among the businesses that participate. But Amstutz is quick to give credit where it's due: "Chaplaincy did not generate this difference," he says. "God did, but it was spurred on by the choice to have a chaplain."

The effort, he says, is making a difference in the way businesses are run throughout the country, partly because of the positive influence of this group of business owners.

"These businessmen made some courageous decisions in deciding to operate their businesses differently than they had in the past, because they knew that having a chaplain sharing the gospel at work meant that their way of doing business would have to agree with what [their chaplain] was preaching," Amstutz says.

Capellanía Empresarial also trains future business chaplains through a one-year postgraduate program. Applicants have to be university graduates with courses in Bible and preferably some seminary. The curriculum includes Anabaptist theology, crisis intervention, family counseling, and the workplace as a platform for evangelism, among others.

Mennonites in Paraguay have had influence nationally. Former Paraguayan president Nicanor Duarte Frutos's wife, Gloria de Duarte, attends a Mennonite church, and a number of members of his cabinet were Mennonites. Recently, a Mennonite ran in the presidential primaries. Now, these Mennonite business owners who are practicing a new business ethic are beginning to have more influence nationally.

Most important is the effect these chaplains have on individual employees. In one dramatic case, the chaplain may have saved a life. Late one afternoon in Asunción, a man entered a business with a pistol and the apparent intent to murder his wife.

A desperate co-worker called the business's chaplain. The chaplain hurried to the scene and calmed down the man. Furthermore, he offered to meet with the couple on an ongoing basis with the ultimate goal of reconciliation. They accepted, and met with the chaplain monthly for six months.
—Andrew Clouse of Mennonite Mission Network

Pastoring in dangerous Bogotá neighborhood

Colombian Mennonite leader combines evangelism and social outreach.

Photo provided

From left: Jesús Libardo Ramírez, Cenelia Muñoz and their son, Daniel. The family is heavily involved in a Colombian Mennonite Church program that combines social outreach and evangelism.

In the neighborhood of Rincón del Lago, part of the outlying metropolitan area of Soacha, Colombia, a Mennonite pastor is seeking to combine his twin passions of evangelism and social outreach.

This form of mission has been a lifelong undertaking for Jesús Libardo Ramírez. Having been born into a family with six children living on a minimum-wage salary in one of Bogotá's most dangerous neighborhoods, Libardo Ramírez has vivid memories of how poverty shaped his life.

"I remember with sadness my friends when I was a boy," Libardo Ramírez says. "We'd play soccer in the street. By 10 years old, they were smoking marijuana, carrying guns and looking for someone to rob. Now they're all dead."

For Libardo Ramírez and his siblings, the story took a dramatic turn for the better. The son of a Christian mother who came to faith through Mennonite missionaries, Libardo Ramírez credits his success to the gospel's transformative power.

"We grew up in this neighborhood, but our family knew the Word of God," he says. "The gospel protected and transformed us from this life. Now, all six of us are professionals who studied in the university."

His past, however, is not a source of self-satisfied pride but a sustaining motivation to share the gospel with those around him.

Libardo Ramírez chose to minister in a neighborhood similar to the one he grew up in. It is one of Bogotá's most marginalized neighborhoods, stricken by poverty, violence and drug abuse. He says he is investing his talents in the lives of children who are growing up much like his boyhood friends.

Seven years ago, he joined the Mennonite Church of Berna City in Bogotá, after helping plant six churches in 10 years with another denomination.

This passion for outreach led him to serve on the church's evangelism committee. He also was drawn to Creciendo Juntos (Growing Together), the church's social outreach program for a community of displaced persons in Rincón del Lago. This after-school program serves 150 children through conflict resolution, dance classes, a recording studio and other activities designed to keep children off the streets and moving toward a positive future.

It was not long before Libardo Ramírez sought a way to merge his two ministry areas in Rincón del Lago. As a member of the steering committee of Creciendo Juntos and a member of the evangelism team at Berna, he realized the after-school program was not going far enough to change the participants' lives.

"With social work you give a snack, a pencil, a sweater, but in mission work you're giving the kingdom of God, which changes lives," Libardo Ramírez says. "If you share the transformative gospel, the person changes from the inside out and won't continue being the same."

Libardo Ramírez and Cenelia, his wife, received support from the Berna Mennonite Church to add a Bible study component to the 10-year-old social project. With a small amount of funding from the Colombian Mennonite Church, Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network, they began Saturday Bible studies with interested families involved in the after-school program. Two years later, the Berna congregation granted approval to launch a church plant in the Rincón del Lago community. Last August, the Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Rincón del Lago (Corner of the Lake Christian Mennonite Church) held its first Sunday worship service, and Jesús and Cenelia are now discipling five baptism candidates.

Their goal is to have 50 baptized members and to develop leadership from within the church in the next two or three years.

From there, only God knows where Libardo Ramírez will serve.

"When one is guided by the Spirit of God, overnight God can call you to a new place, and one needs to be ready to go," he says. "Since God called me to ministry, I've told God that material things won't keep me from going where he leads me."—*Theresé Witmer for Mennonite Mission Network*

Feeding cattle for the church

Agri-Urban program raises more than $5 million over 40 years.

Vada Snider

Alan Entz of Newton, Kan., a participant in the Agri-Urban program, feeds Agri-Urban cattle.

Alan Entz of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan., walks along the feed bunk, bucket in hand, feeding the cattle. The corn pours, and the big "AU" proclaims that these cattle belong to the Agri-Urban program.

"Agri-Urban means I can do something with what I already do and give money to Western District, Bethel College and Mennonite Church USA," Entz says. "The concept is simple: Urban people buy the cattle, and we farmers feed them."

It may sound simple, but in the early 1970s, when Elbert Koontz first sold the dream to Western District Conference (WDC) officers, the responses were mixed. Some thought it might work for awhile and then die out. Others weren't sure why the conference should be "in the cattle business." What the idea had going for it was that it offered a program for farmers and urban dwellers to join hands and raise funds to benefit the conference.

When the vote came up at the 1971 fall WDC gathering, it passed by a wide margin, and Agri-Urban was born. Later, the committee leading the program decided to expand the plan to include Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., and the General Conference Mennonite Church. A farmer selling Agri-Urban livestock could designate any of the three institutions to receive the profits. Undesignated profits were split, with half going to WDC and one fourth each going to Bethel College and the General Conference.

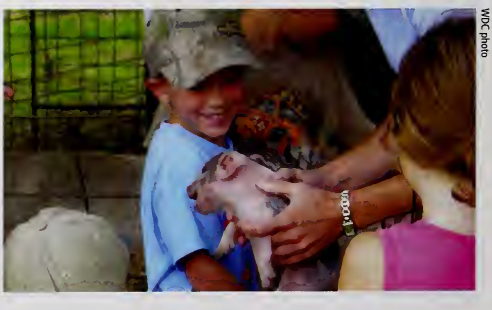
Forty years after the first cattle were purchased by Agri-Urban, it's hard to tally the impact this program has made on the people involved and on the ministries it benefits. Nearly $5.5 million has been raised, the program has expanded to involve grain, and several thousand people in Kansas and Nebraska have contributed funds, purchased feed certificates, fed livestock or donated grain. Beef cattle, dairy calves and milk, pigs and grain have all been sold.

Currently, the strongest participation is in Zion Mennonite (Elbing, Kan.) and Grace Hill Mennonite (Whitewater, Kan.) congregations east of Newton. Russ Janzen's father, Herman Janzen of Zion Mennonite, was one of the first farmers to participate, and Russ Janzen has continued to feed 8 to 10 cattle every year for more than 20 years on his Elbing farm.

Dwight Flaming of Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in Goessel, Kan., is another second-generation Agri-Urban farmer. His father, Randolf Flaming, was a dairyman who got enthused about the program, even though it involved beef cattle.

In 1996, Randolf Flaming was part of an Agri-Urban board that dreamed a new dream. Hoping to give children a chance to touch farm animals and hear stories from people caring for them, the board members wondered about creating a "Day on the Farm." They approached Maynard Knepp and Carol Duerksen of Tabor Mennonite Church (Newton) about hosting the event on their farm between Goessel and Hillsboro, Kan. The farm was already home to numerous animals and provided shade trees, open spaces and pens to house additional animals. The couple agreed, and on Sept. 7, 1996, more than 500 people participated in the first annual Day on the Farm, which usually brings in $2,000.

"After the first event back in 1996, a child asked her parents if she could go back the next day because it was the most fun thing she could think of doing," says Entz, who is in his ninth year on the Agri-Urban board and fifth year as chairperson.—*Carol Duerksen for Mennonite Church USA*


WDC photo

Participants engage the activities at the annual Day on the Farm near Goessel, Kan.

AMBS and Bethel complete graduations

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Bethel graduate 128 students.

Mary E. Klassen

New graduates of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., respond to the charge to them by reading familiar words from Menno Simons. Among the graduates are Karla Minter, Heather Bunce, Delora Reinhardt, Bryan Belting and Cecelia Goodrich.

Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., 100 graduates, May 20

Bethel College's 119th commencement took place May 20, beginning with baccalaureate in the morning at Bethel College Mennonite Church. The 100 members of Bethel College's Class of 2012 enter an unknown future with hope and faith in a God who loves them and the strong backing of a community that has nurtured them.

"At the end of the day, we're family," said Ryan Goertzen, Goessel, one of four students giving reflections at the service. "We can count on each other."

Ritual and music, poetry, prayers and Scripture readings reinforced the baccalaureate theme expressed in a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Make the most of yourself for that is all there is of you."

Recalling the class's past—still-raw grief over the death of class member Seth Dunn in August 2011 as well as the joys of friendships formed, the challenges of lessons learned and the humor of pranks pulled—the student speakers expressed gratitude to each other and their mentors.

Commencement speaker Susan Schultz Huxman, president of the youngest Mennonite college in North America, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, brought greetings and congratulations to Bethel, the oldest Mennonite college on the continent.

Huxman, a 1982 Bethel graduate, is also the mother of 2012 graduate Julia Huxman, as well as the daughter of Carolyn and former Bethel College president Harold Schultz. She urged students to savor special memories of the past and to keep their stories alive.

Hindsight, Huxman said, is "the ability to see what has come before you" and is one of three ways of seeing that graduates should pack in their "pro-visions" for life. Like water is to the fish that swim in it, these three ways are "hidden in plain sight."—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., 28 graduates, May 26

Where does graduation day fit into God's larger vision? Shanta Premawardhana asked graduates of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary at its commencement May 26 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. Throughout his address, the president of the Seminary Consortium of Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago explored ways graduates might contribute to this vision of bringing healing to world today. "Dreaming the impossible dream is not enough. We need to be willing to strap that faith to our feet," he said, "or it stays a utopian vision with no reality on the ground."

Vada Snider

2012 Bethel College graduates Cassidy McFadden, right, and Wendy Stephens participate in the candlelighting on May 20.

Twenty-eight students were honored in the commencement service. Nineteen received the Master of Divinity degree, a three-year program that prepares people for pastoral ministry. Four received the Master of Arts: Peace Studies, two the Master of Arts: Theological Studies and two the Master of Arts in Christian Formation. One graduate received the Certificate in Theological Studies.—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

MDS ends seven-year recovery effort in New Orleans

Last Gulf Coast project closes with gratitude: 'You have blessed us,' says pastor.

Sheldon C. Good

Charles Duplessis, pastor of Mount Nebo Bible Baptist Church, hugs Kevin King, MDS executive director, at the house which MDS rebuilt.

After spending seven years and $8 million responding along the Gulf Coast to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Mennonite Disaster Service has formally closed its last project here. About 70 MDS personnel, Mennonite leaders and local pastors, disaster response workers and community members gathered May 16 at MDS headquarters in New Orleans for a commemoration ceremony.

The "Passing the Torch" event celebrated MDS's work along the Gulf Coast, the longest continuous effort in its 62-year history.

Hurricane Katrina—the costliest and one of the five deadliest hurricanes ever to strike the United States—ravaged the Gulf Coast in late August 2005. Days later, MDS volunteers began cleanup work. Less than a month after that, Hurricane Rita struck much of the same area.

At the May 16 event, Pastor Charles Duplessis—who lost not only his house but the meeting place of his church, Mount Nebo Bible Baptist—thanked MDS for its work.

"Individually and collectively you have blessed us," he said. "I want to thank you for loving God and for loving people, whether they know God or not. God has been good to you because of your service. God has been good to us because of your service."

MDS volunteers built Duplessis a new home, which currently doubles as the congregation's meeting place. His former house was swept away when a wall of water broke through a levee and surged through New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward.

After constructing the house, MDS learned the drywall from China that was used emitted sulfurous gases. The drywall may have been used in more than 100,000 homes across the South, reports said.

As a result, Duplessis' wife and fellow family members, as well as thousands of other people, suffered respiratory problems. MDS gutted the entire home and rebuilt it.

"My family wants to thank you for doing it twice," he said. "You made it right, again."

Like Duplessis, each person on the Gulf Coast has a unique story from 2005, the most active Atlantic hurricane season on record, which led to an estimated 3,913 deaths and record damage of $159.2 billion. So does MDS executive director Kevin King.

The May 16 event turned somber as King recalled the day Katrina began striking New Orleans and southern Mississippi.

"As the news came in, I was glued to the TV. I was pacing around like a caged cat," he said.

King called previous MDS directors, who said he needed to visit the Gulf immediately. A private airplane flew him up and down the Gulf Coast 1,000 feet above sea level.

"Never in my history of 21 years of disaster work did I fly in one direction for an hour and a half and not get out of the disaster scene," he said. "And that's when I knew this was huge."

The scope of MDS's response to the two hurricanes was unprecedented for the Lititz, Pa.-based organization. More than 17,000 volunteers worked 126,400 days throughout the effort, completing 194 cleanup sites, 739 minor repairs, 183 major repairs and 112 rebuilds.

MDS operated 19 projects along the Gulf Coast after the back-to-back hurricanes. The largest project was in New Orleans, where the most deaths occurred—more than 1,400, reports said.

The organization received $8 million: $6 million designated for the storms and an additional $2 million in general donations.

The "Passing the Torch" event marked a unique transition for MDS. Though the organization consistently moves in and out of locations across the United States and Canada, perhaps never before has it developed such deep relationships with local pastors and ministries. King honored MDS disaster response coordinator Jerry Klassen's vision to "start with the churches."

"And today, we are celebrating emerging partnerships with churches," King said.

Dwight Webster is the other minister for whom MDS rebuilt a home. Webster is the senior and founding pastor of Christian Unity Baptist Church.—*Sheldon C. Good. This originally ran in* Mennonite World Review.

Church gets surgery for woman with mouth tumor

Director of Central American Medical Outreach attends Salem Mennonite Church.

On April 25, an international humanitarian team performed a first-of-its-kind surgery in Honduras to free a young woman of a melon-sized tumor in her mouth. This surgery was made possible largely in part to a generous donation by Salem Mennonite Church of Kidron, Ohio.

Kathryn Tschiegg, executive director and founder of Central American Medical Outreach (CAMO), attends Salem Mennonite. She told the story of Carmen Sanchez Yorleny to the congregation at its annual meeting early this year. Moved by Carmen's story, the church donated enough funds to cover the surgery, medical team and a future home for this young woman.

The surgery, performed at Centro Medico, a private hospital in Santa Rosa de Copan, was planned and supported by CAMO and performed by an international team of surgeons and nurses.

The patient, 23-year-old Carmen Sanchez Yorleny of Santa Rosa de Copan, who has been unable to speak, eat or smile for many years due to the tumor, has been released from postsurgical intensive care and transferred to a rehabilitation center for speech, physical and psychological therapy. A full recovery is expected.

Salem has been supporting CAMO since it was founded by Tschiegg in 1993.

Through donations, volunteers, service groups and prayer, this active congregation has been a blessing to this growing aid organization in Honduras.

Carmen Sanchez Yorleny was orphaned early in life. Her massive facial tumor started as a small sore when she was 6 years old but went untreated for many years.

By her teenage years, the tumor began to grow rapidly, and her sister sought medical advice and care. Without resources, it was difficult for the sisters to travel or to pay for any treatments. At age 19, Sanchez Yorleny could no longer speak, and it was difficult for her to breathe or eat properly.

In January, she was discovered by a visiting group of Jehovah's Witnesses, who took a photo and sent it on to an employee of CAMO in the hope that CAMO could help her.

Upon learning about Sanchez Yorleny, Tschiegg set in motion the events that led to the surgery.

Tschiegg has also made plans for Sanchez Yorleny's rehabilitative care, future education and skills training and change in housing situation.—*Central American Medical Outreach*

Congratulations Joaquin Sosa!
Sierra Club 2012 Outdoor Youth Ambassador
EMU digital media major
Follow Joaquin as he video blogs across the country this summer!
Eastern Mennonite University
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ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH US!

2012 TOURS

EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
LANDS of the BIBLE: JORDAN and ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR TYLER HARTFORD (July 19-28)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 23-September 3)
TOUR to LITHUANIA (in partnership with LCC International University) (September 12-19)
MENNONITE STORY in POLAND and UKRAINE (September 18-29)
SCENIC AUTUMN CRUISE: CANADA and NEW ENGLAND (October 6-16)
MEDA TOUR to ETHIOPIA and TANZANIA (October12-24)
SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (October 13-22)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)
MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS

JAMAICA - Its PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 11-20)
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
MEDA in MOROCCO (April 2-12)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25)
MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN and CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28-May 7)
EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15)
GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 24-June 6)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 6-19)
ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
RUSSIA & UKRAINE (September 9-21)
THE BRITISH ISLES (England, Scotland and Wales) with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (October 17-28)
CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (November 1-15)
EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (December 9-15)

2014 TOURS

THE AMAZON RAIN FOREST and GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (January 16-26)
SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA and its FJORDS (June 13-26)

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Same-sex unions spark two-part decision

May contribute to two churches leaving Central District Conference

Last year, Megan Ramer, pastor of Chicago Community Mennonite Church (CCMC), performed three same-sex covenant ceremonies for couples and friends of the congregation after receiving the blessing of her church.

As a result, one congregation may leave Central District Conference (CDC), and the action may contribute to a second congregation leaving.

According to a ministerial credential report from a May review, CDC's ministerial committee announced an unprecedented two-part decision.

First, the decision includes an affirmation of Ramer's ministerial gifts and work at CCMC.

Second, it also finds that Ramer's actions are at variance with Mennonite Church USA's membership guidelines and will note that in her Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) form.

Civil unions became legal in Illinois on June 1, 2011. In the summer of 2011, Ramer contacted conference leadership with the request of performing such ceremonies. Then she informed the conference of her plans.

A statement by Ramer and Celeste Grace Groff, CCMC council chair, representing the church, reads: "Our practice around weddings and commitment ceremonies is one of the many ways we as a congregation seek to care for all those who join us in worship, mission and community life."

We have always had a conference polity that respects the discernment of its congregations as well as recognizes the diversity in our conference.—Lois Johns Kaufmann

The same-sex couples were members of or connected to the congregation.

This is also true for the opposite-sex couples she marries, said Groff on May 29.

"[Ramer] has several ceremonies upcoming this summer," Groff said, "and I think at least one of them is a same-sex couple. But again, our congregation's ministry in this area is to continue with an inclusive marriage practice, not celebrating ceremonies for same-sex couples in exceptional cases."

Over the past year, the CDC ministerial committee met with Ramer, Groff and the congregation.

They requested that Ramer write her "theological and biblical underpinnings" for performing same-sex covenant ceremonies, according to the credential review report.

The CDC ministerial committee also planned a retreat day for discernment.

"[Through this two-part decision] we are responding out of who CDC is," said Lois Johns Kaufmann, conference minister, on May 29. "We have always had a conference polity that respects the discernment of its congregations as well as recognizes the diversity in our conference."

Kaufmann serves as an ex-officio member of the ministerial committee.

Since the two-part decision, two congregations in CDC "expressed their readiness" to engage in conversation with CDC leadership about seeking membership in another Mennonite Church USA conference.

One of the two churches was "moving to leave CDC before they ever knew about the credential review for Megan Ramer," Kaufmann said.

They will follow the procedure set by Mennonite Church USA Executive Board when congregations seek to change conference affiliation.

Kaufmann said the other responses she has received "reflect the diversity in the church."

Kaufmann said she received affirmation from several Mennonite Church USA leaders for the carefulness of the process and openly sharing about it with the wider church.

Additionally, several conference ministers shared their appreciation for CDC's desire for accountability demonstrated in the second part of the ministerial committee decision, she said.

"It seems important for future search committees to have that information about Ramer if they would be considering her as a pastor," said Kaufmann.

Kaufmann said she hopes that congregational leaders will speak directly to other congregational leaders they disagree with, rather than "triangling" conference leaders.

"I acknowledge that's hard, but it's the healthiest," she said, adding that direct conversation between congregations has occurred in the past.

At CDC's annual meeting June 21-23 at the Mennonite Church of Normal, Ill., conference delegates will have the opportunity to respond to the committee.

However, the two-part decision cannot be overturned, since the committee has the authority to make these decisions.

Kaufmann said there are no other situations similar to Ramer's in the conference.

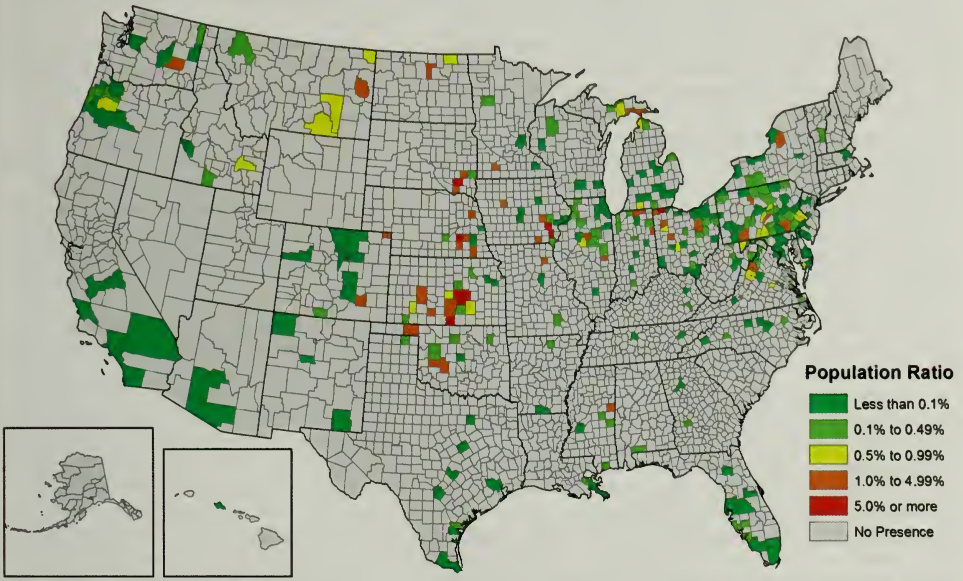
The ministerial committee members include Kaufmann; Joel Miller, Jep Hostetler, Ken Hawkley, Rachel Miller Jacobs and Rachel Siemens.—*Anna Groff*

Full disclosure: *Celeste Grace Groff and Anna Groff are sisters-in-law.*

Survey shows Mennonite Church USA spread

MC USA members were more than 5 percent of population in nine counties.

Population Penetration, Mennonite Church USA Adherents in the United States, 2010



©Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, 2012
2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Research Services using ESRI ArcMap 10.0

919 congregations and 127,363 adherents were reported in 347 counties.

A grant from the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis allowed statisticians to count the number of adherents in U.S. Christian denominations in 2010. Funding for Buddhist and Hindu counts was provided by the John Templeton Foundation, West Conshohocken, Pa. A total of 236 faith groups were counted.

According to the results, released May 1 at the Associated Church Press convention in Chicago, Mennonite Church USA had 127,363 adherents in 2010. This is significantly higher than the 109,000 members listed on the Mennonite Church USA website. However, the 2010 count reports 919 congregations, while the Mennonite Church USA site currently lists 939 congregations.

The website USReligionCensus.org offers maps for all groups. The 726-page paper report has 22 maps, including the one reproduced above. The survey was done by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies.

According to the report, the percentage of Mennonite Church USA adherents was more than 5 percent in nine counties (red counties in the map). These were Harper, Harvey, Marion and McPherson counties in Kansas; Henry and Washington counties in Iowa; Seward County, Neb.; Hutchinson County, S.D.; and Fulton County, Ohio. Harvey County, Kan., had the highest percentage in the country: its 4,339 adherents represented 22.5 percent of all adherents in that county and 12.5 percent of the county population.

Lancaster (Pa.) County had the largest number of Mennonite Church USA adherents with 15,225. This represented 6 percent of all adherents in the county and 2.9 percent of the county's population.

Elkhart (Ind.) County had the second-largest number of Mennonite Church USA adherents with 8,409. This number represented 10.2 percent of all adherents and 4.3 percent of the county's population.—*Everett J. Thomas*

How are we doing as a peace church?

Mennonite World Conference asks for and receives a report card.

There is much to be grateful for about life in the United States. Though imperfect, we are thankful for traditions of participatory democracy, the protection of civil liberties and freedom of religion, the rule of law and practices of governmental accountability, and the economic opportunity that many enjoy. Many Mennonites have thrived in this setting—economically, culturally and institutionally.

This has not been the experience of all, however. The decimation of Native communities and the bitter legacy of slavery continue to haunt our nation. Today many recent immigrants are forced to live in the shadows, even as they provide indispensable labor for our society. Further, over the past 25 years our nation has experienced a dramatic increase in inequality of both income and wealth, with one in five children living in poverty.

We must also acknowledge that our nation has the largest and most powerful military in the history of the world. A worldwide network of U.S. military bases and massive military spending protects our way of life and helps maintain extreme global inequality. Two ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have taken the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. We may be tempted to conclude that this arrangement, however flawed and broken, is better than conceivable alternatives and thus deserving of our tacit support. Yet we know how the Bible speaks of empires, and we recognize how self-serving it is to assume the U.S. empire is different from all those that preceded it.

We are disoriented and confused by recent events that have impacted our communities: the 9/11 attacks, the collapse of huge companies and near collapse of our entire financial system, high levels of unemployment, the erosion of middle-class living standards, a growing preoccupation with "homeland security" and the continuous waging of war. Our unease is intensified by signs that our culture is in many ways a culture of violence. Disturbing statistics about gun violence, abortion, sexual assault and exploitation, and media violence could readily be cited.

How is Mennonite Church USA doing in our desire to be a peace church?

At the outset it must be said that there is wide diversity among our congregations and members as to how we understand what it means to be a peace church and how we live that out. We also need to speak with a great deal of humility. We are aware of how limited we are in our witness to the life-transforming and world-changing gospel of peace. Nonetheless, we rejoice with gratitude for the times and places when God's grace has broken through and empowered sisters and brothers among us—past and present—to offer a word of truth or a deed of courage and where God's Spirit has led the church to live, even if in small ways, as a colony of heaven in the midst of this society.

As Christians in the U.S. context, we are subject to extremely powerful cultural forces of affluence, frantic busyness and radical individualism. These hamper us in our striving for God's kingdom. Our affluence dulls us to the pain of those around us and leads us to protect and justify our way of life. Our busyness keeps us from developing deep spiritual roots that can carry courageous peacemaking. Our individualism prevents us from forming communities of mutual support and accountability that can resist the pressures of the culture.

When we are prepared to listen, brothers and sisters in our global family of faith can help us see more clearly our own cultural context and how it shapes and forms us. They can embolden and inspire us to worship and follow Jesus in this place.

As we ponder the question of how we are doing at being a peace church, we become aware of many areas where we see hope and promise, as well as related questions and concerns:

1. We are encouraged that our church leaders and institutions to a large degree embrace the language and calling of peace. Examples we might cite include: peacemaking and justice concerns included in the core value and priority statements of the church, the development of peace studies programs at colleges and seminaries, an old established area conference highlighting peace witness in the program booklet celebrating its anniversary, the founding and support of Christian Peacemaker Teams, conference websites that often include peace resources, frequent articles on topics related to the gospel of peace in our church periodical *The Mennonite* and books on peace themes from our publishing house.

We are concerned, however, with these:

- There is a gap—between denominational and agency leaders, academics, activists and some urban congregations on the one hand, and members in many congregations on the other—in how we think and talk about our calling to peacemaking and how it relates to our faith.
- At times, the embrace of peace seems to be a matter of language and branding. We are concerned that our peace witness should arise from a deeply rooted identity with Jesus rather than from changing waves of an unreliable and popular secular interest in peace.
- In some conferences, because of restructuring and limited finances, peace and mission committees have been disbanded, and there is no volunteer or staff person tending these concerns.
- Our peace work often centers in small clusters of passionate people who aren't always deeply rooted in the fabric of congregational life.

2. We note with appreciation that in past decades we have deepened our biblical and theological understandings that undergird our peace witness. Our commitment to Christian peacemaking is not based simply on a few verses but is rooted in the teaching, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Increasingly, for example, Mennonite peacemakers see the cross as the ultimate expression of how God rights wrong, overcomes sin and evil, and loves even enemies. Increasingly, we also see peace as not just the absence of violence but by necessity encompassing justice understood as right relationship. Mennonite Bible scholars and theologians of past decades have made remarkable contributions, both within and beyond the Mennonite world, in articulating and deepening understanding of the gospel of peace.

We are concerned, however, with these:

- Many of our members' theology is shaped more by Christian radio and secular talk shows than by the curriculum from our publishing house.
- Too often peace is disconnected from other aspects of what it means to be an Anabaptist Christian. When you ask some members what it means to be Mennonite, they might say, "It's like being an evangelical plus peace." When you ask others, they might say. "It's like being a mainline Protestant plus peace." In this way, peace has again become an "add-on," even if a valued one, rather than one important part of a whole web of commitments of what it means to live in communities which are formed in the image of Jesus.
- At times, the ethics of peacemaking is accentuated in ways that disconnect it from a life of faith that is rooted and grounded in the love of God as made known through Jesus.
- Some among us tend to emphasize God's forgiveness and gracious gifts of love, while others emphasize following Jesus and living out his teachings. Too often, still, grace and discipleship are not integrated in our teaching, preaching and living.

There is a gap—between denominational and agency leaders, academics, activists and some urban congregations on the one hand, and members in many congregations on the other—in how we think and talk about our calling to peacemaking.

3. We are encouraged that in our transition from farm to town to city, we are building relationships with our neighbors, sharing our faith and engaging in mission where we live and work.

We note that as we are more culturally engaged, our congregations have taken different approaches. Some have highlighted peace and justice commitments as a central part of proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom and attracting newcomers. There are numerous examples of people who have joined our congregations precisely because of teaching and practice rooted in the gospel of peace. At the same time, other congregations have minimized the peace witness, also in hopes of being more attractive to newcomers. Some have suggested that the events of 9/11 resulted in a silencing of our church on peacemaking in some settings. Some members report hearing few "peace sermons" in their congregations, and sometimes newer members are surprised when in a crisis moment they first hear about Mennonite peace convictions.

We also note that as congregations walk with real people in difficult circumstances, they are often less legalistic than they might have been several generations ago. We live with more shades of gray than we used to. Many of our congregations are now less likely to expel a youth who grew up in the church and then enlisted in the military. This does not necessarily mean our convictions are weaker, but it requires careful, ongoing tending and articulation of our core commitments.

4. We are gratified that our peace witness is not just a matter of saying no to physical violence but also saying yes to the fullness of life God wants for us. It includes a wide variety of constructive and positive initiatives. Our peacemaking thus includes mediation, victim-offender reconciliation, domestic violence prevention, healing for victims of abuse, work for racial justice and much more. Working for peace with all creation is also increasingly understood as part of our peace witness.

We are concerned, however, with these:

- For some of our congregations and members, "peace" is still primarily a matter of not going to war. In a time when there is no draft, engagement in peace witness wanes.
- Even though there is no formal draft, our young men and women, especially in racial/ethnic communities, face the strong pressures of an economic draft, and we have not found ways to be in solidarity with them financially and otherwise to help them say no.
- Our tax monies are conscripted, and each year our church members pay for cruise missiles, smart bombs and unmanned drones—with barely the slightest tinge of conscience, let alone a whimper of protest.

We recall the powerful faith-forming role that alternative service played in our church (whether through Civilian Public Service, 1-W or international service programs), and we wonder what might be the comparable experiences today.

We also note that although we have a well-developed peace theology and practice:

- we have an underdeveloped theology and understanding of justice/right relationship, especially in economic areas such as fair wages, the rights of workers to organize and inequality in income and wealth;
- we are challenged to develop a theology and

practice of hospitality to the stranger, to know how to stand in solidarity with immigrant sisters and brothers and to be witnesses for justice in a time of increasing hostility and punitive measures directed toward immigrants;

- we have only begun to ponder how our context as citizens of empire requires fresh thinking about our peace witness and about how we fashion our lives as alternative communities that speak to the events of our times and offer truthfulness and hope to those who are discouraged and disillusioned.

5. We note that over the past decades some parts of our church have moved from a nonresistant quietism to what might be described as nonviolent activism. This resulted from an awareness that whether we like it or not, we are enmeshed in systems of violence, that in a democratic system we share responsibility for the actions of our government and that we must actively seek to stand with victims and work for justice. This witness is often most compelling and powerful when it is rooted in relationships with those who suffer injustice and violence.

We are concerned, however, with these:

- As we seek to be advocates, we are sometimes in danger of embracing the notion that what is really important is changing government. We sometimes place more hope in government than we do in the church as the place where God's "new thing" breaks into the world.
- As we become more engaged in the political arena, we have developed stronger commitments to political parties, which can undermine our shared loyalty to Jesus. Some parts of the church would perceive the language and focus of much of our peace witness to be too closely allied with a liberal political agenda.
- Perhaps for fear of appearing partisan, it is difficult as a church to speak the truth about specific acts and forms of violence, especially those that reveal deceit and malevolence, preferring instead statements of general principle.
- Some among us continue to hold a strict two-kingdom conviction that we should not engage in political advocacy of any kind.

6. We are strengthened in our own peace convictions and witness by others in the broader body of Christ who encourage us not to give up our gospel treasures but who also challenge us to be more courageous and faithful witnesses.

We are concerned, however, that

- at the same time, we face the challenge of dealing creatively and in a Christlike manner with the differences among us, whether they are different perspectives on volatile issues or differences of race and economic status.—*Mennonite Church USA's response to Mennonite World Conference's query was drafted by André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness for Mennonite Church USA, after taking counsel from area conference leaders and testing this response with a wider circle of pastors, teachers, denominational leaders and practitioners and others.*

RESOURCES

Relics and Miracles: Two Theological Essays by Sergius Bulgakov, translated by Boris Jakim (Eerdmans, 2011, $24), presents two theological essays by a leading Russian Orthodox theologian. "On Holy Relics" is a 1918 response to Bolshevik desecration of the relics of Russian saints and connects them with the Incarnation. "On Gospel Miracles," written in 1932, presents a Christological doctrine of miracles, focusing on how human activity relates to the works of Christ.

And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament by Fleming Rutledge (Eerdmans, 2011, $30) collects 60 sermons that expound on familiar Old Testament passages featuring Abraham, Samuel, David, Elijah, Job, Jonah and other figures. She applies these texts to contemporary life and theology.

Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom , edited by Bruce Ellis Benson, Malinda Elizabeth Berry and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Eerdmans, 2012, $35), brings together 15 contributors who share their visions for a biblically centered, culturally engaged and historically infused evangelicalism.

Joshua: Believers Church Bible Commentary by Gordon H. Matties (Herald Press, 2012, $29.99) engages critically with texts that have been used to justify colonialism, conquest, occupation and ethnic cleansing. Matties suggests that reading Joshua carefully will open windows into how and why we read Scripture at all.

Relentless Goodbye: Grief and Love in the Shadow of Dementia by Ginnie Horst Burkholder (Herald Press, 2012, $16.99) shares about caring with humor, love, commitment and faith for a spouse who is slowly slipping away to Lewy body dementia.

Reformers, Radicals, Revolutionaries: Anabaptism in the Context of the Reformation Conflict by Abraham Friesen (Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2012, $20.95) distills the debate about "penance" and "repentance" with clarity and insight, demonstrating its significance for Anabaptist ecclesiology.

Gathering at God's Table: The Meaning of Mission in the Feast of Faith by Katherine Jefferts Schori (SkyLight Paths, 2012, $21.99) explores the meaning of mission in the context of contemporary life: feeding, healing and teaching.

Fly-Fishing—the Sacred Art: Casting a Fly as a Spiritual Practice by Michael Attas and Eric Eisenkramer (SkyLight Paths, 2012, $21.99) shares what fly-fishing has to teach us about reflection, awe and the wonder of the natural world, the benefits of solitude, the blessing of community and the search for the Divine.

WORKERS

Eberly, Matthew, was installed as associate pastor at Shiloh Mennonite Church, Reading, Pa., on Feb. 5.

Hendricks, Patricia, was ordained for chaplaincy ministry at Mercy House, Harrisonburg, Va., at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church on March 25.

Hodge, Mark, was ordained as minister of youth and evangelism at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Lyndhurst, Va., on April 22.

Horning, Philip, was ordained as lead pastor at Gehman Mennonite Church, Adamstown, Pa., on May 13.

Kreider, Barry, was ordained as pastor at Pilgrims Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa., on April 22.

Moyer, Vernon R., was licensed as assistant pastor at 3:16 Christian Community Church, Hickory, N.C., on April 22.

Scholtz, Todd, was ordained at Wilkens Avenue Mennonite Church, Baltimore, Md., on May 6.

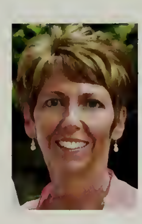
OBITUARIES

Bandy, Murray Cecil, 93, Hesston, Kan., died May 4. Spouse: Dessie Troyer Bandy (deceased). Parents: Joseph Edgar and Ola Ellison Bandy. Child: Sondra Bandy Koontz. Funeral: May 10 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Barkman, Betty, 81, Altona, Manitoba, died April 15. Parents: Pete L. and Helena Harms Barkman. Funeral: April 19 at Eastview Place, Altona.

Bontrager, Lucy G. Gerber, 58, Hesston, Kan., died May 1. Spouse: Jerre Bontrager. Parents: Emery and Joan Ely Gerber. Children: Jerod, Jordan. Funeral: May 4 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston.

Brenneman, Blanche Ellen, 87, Kalona, Iowa, died May 17. Parents: Henry and Minnie Knepp Brenneman. Funeral: May 20 at Yoder-Powell Funeral Home, Kalona.



Doehrmann, Ronda Jean, 52, Bellefontaine, Ohio, passed away from melanoma May 11, in her home. Ronda was born on Feb. 2, 1960 in Wauseon, Ohio, the youngest daughter of the late Donald and Fern Stuckey Wyse. She is survived by her husband, Noel "Tony" Doehrmann, whom she married on May 19, 1979. Also surviving are three children, Brady (Barry) Hoylman of Pettisville, Ohio, Jacob (Kasey) Doehrmann of Archbold, Ohio, and Eli Doehrmann of Fayette, Ohio; two grandchildren, Macy and Kobe Hoylman of Pettisville, Ohio; a brother, Ross (Karen) Wyse of Archbold, Ohio; and a sister, Roxanne (Neal) Kauffman of Joliet, Ill. Ronda is preceded in death by her brother, Byron. Ronda lived and worked in the Archbold area at The Home Restaurant, Sauder Woodworking and later stayed home raising her children. Her love for people equipped her to care for the children of others in her home and later to assist the elderly in their homes. In 2006 she moved with her husband to Hesston, Kan., where she worked at a child care facility. In 2008, they moved to Bellefontaine where they began serving at Jubilee Mennonite Church. Ronda was a former member at Lockport Mennonite Church in Stryker, Ohio and a covenant member of Jubilee Mennonite Church in Bellefontaine, Ohio. Pastor John Thomas officiated at a funeral service on May 16 at the Jubilee Mennonite Church, Bellefontaine, Ohio. There will be a memorial service at the Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, with burial in the Lockport Cemetery at a later date.

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Ediger, Shirley Lucille Regier, 77, Inman, Kan., died May 13. Spouse: John F. Ediger. Parents: Jacob L. and Ida Mae Ratzlaff Regier. Children: Kay Schmidt, Randy, Russell, Barbara Ellen Brown; 12 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 16 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Eichelberger, Leta Marie Oyer, 85, Lakewood, Colo., died May 9, of a heart attack. Spouse: John Eldon Eichelberger (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Elmira Naffziger Oyer. Children: Douglas J., Cynthia M. Eichelberger-Ziegler; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 18 at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood.

Gehman, Donald H., 81, Lancaster, Pa., died May 18. Spouse: Ruth Eby Gehman. Parents: Aaron W. and Florence Baker Gehman. Children: Diane E. Gehman, Frederic. Funeral: May 22 at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

Goering, Jon Edward, 64, Newton, Kan., died May 29. Parents: Elmer H. and Gladys Graber Goering. Funeral: June 4 at First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, Kan.

Hamilton, Jessie Matilda Yoder, 92, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 6. Spouse: Eldon Leslie Hamilton (deceased). Parents: Hiram and Rhoda Shenk Yoder. Children: Elsie Hamilton Bowman, James, Alice Hamilton Brubaker, David; 13 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 10 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linnville. Va.

Harder, Eldon Bernard, 89, Aberdeen, Idaho, died May 26 of a stroke. Spouse: Helen Klempel Harder. Parents: Willie and Catherine Wiebe Harder. Children: Jim, Gene, Stan; 10 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 31 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Kool, Rebekah Smith, 30, Orange, Va., died April 18. Spouse: Harm Kool. Parents: Les and Betsy Crockett Smith. Funeral: April 28 in Orange, Va.

LeFevre, Robert E., 80, Goshen, Ind., died March 1, of injuries sustained in a fall. Spouse: Carolyn Main LeFevre. Parents: Noah and Esther Landis LeFevre. Children: Marcia Friesen, Karen Swartzendruber, Jackie Sue LeFevre, Dennis, Ronald; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Lehman, Mary Elizabeth, 80, Kidron, Ohio, died March 20. Parents: Silas Cleophas and Bertha Nussbaum Lehman. Funeral: March 23 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron.

Lehman, Naomi Krady, 89, Ephrata, Pa., died May 6, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Paul Lehman. Parents: Daniel Stoner Krady and Francis Miller Krady. Children: Judy Stoltzfus, Jim, Jerry; seven grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: May 12 at the Welcoming Place of Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, Pa.

Liechty, Reuben L., 83, Sarasota, Fla., died May 2. Spouse: Ruth E. Zook Liechty. Parents: Silas and Sarah Frey Liechty. Children: Gene, Tricia Watson, Elizabeth Liechty; eight grandchildren. Funeral: May 26 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

Miller, Daniel, Jr., 77, Boerne, Texas, died June 9. Spouse: Mary Ellen Hershberger Miller. Parents: Dan H. and Katie L. Miller. Children: Jan R. Lehman, James R., Julie R. Nielsen; four grandchildren. Funeral: June 14 at San Antonio Mennonite Church, San Antonio, Texas, and June 18 at Yoder-Powell Funeral Home, Kalona, Iowa.

Neuenschwander, Paul A., 90, Kidron, Ohio, died March 13, of a stroke. Spouse: Carrie Anna Lehman Neuenschwander (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Lydia Martha Amstutz Neuenschwander. Children: Kathleen Zendt, Kenneth, Norma Burkholder, Arthur, Shirley Hochstetler, Janet Hostetler; 14 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron.

Shank, Odela Elizabeth Sutter, 89, Goshen, Ind, died March 21. Spouse: Raymond L. Shank (deceased). Parents: Lawrence and Sarah Birkey Sutter. Children: Lorraine Borntrager, Wanda Bouwman, Galen, Leon, Marlin. Funeral: March 24 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling, Ill.

Tann, Jo, 89, Goshen, Ind., died May 21, of pneumonia. Spouse: Herman Tann (deceased). Children: Amy Buckwalter, Millie Birky, Eugene; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. No funeral service.

Troyer, Cephas C., 91, Goshen, Ind., died April 21. Spouse: Mary Jean Birky Troyer. Parents: Christian M. and Elizabeth Miller Troyer. Children: Janice Beachy, Nevin; six grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 25 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Unzicker, Carl David, 73, Goshen, Ind., died May 25. Spouse: Arleta Unzicker. Parents: Earl and Josephine Ulrich Unzicker. Children: Timothy, Antony; four grandchildren. Funeral: May 30 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Voth, Peter C., 91, Altona, Manitoba, died April 17. Spouse: Mary Voth. Parents: Cornelius and Margaret Kroeker Voth. Children: Carol Kehler, Gerald, Rose Braun, Marilynn Arnott; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Wade, Gary Duane, 56, Washington, Iowa, died May 5, of cancer. Spouse: Shirley Boese Wade. Parents: Darrel and Edith Yoder Wade. Children: Jameson, Michelle Wade. Funeral: May 11 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

Waltner, Mary Winifred Schlosser, 97, Elkhart, Ind., died May 17. Spouse: Erland Waltner (deceased). Parents: George and Mary Ogden Schlosser. Children: Mary Liechty Adams, Kathleen Waltner-Toews, Rose Graber, Irene Nadon; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: June 2 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Watts, Marcus E., 84, Newton, Kan., died May 9. Spouse: Joyce Unruh Schroeder Watts. Parents: Arthur James and Flo May Carter Watts. Children: Sandy Carnahan, Connie Watts, Dee Peipho; eight grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Step-children: DeVona Powell, Marcus Schroeder, Rusten Schroeder, Brent Schroeder; six step-grandchildren. Funeral: May 21 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton.

Weaver, Arlie Virginia Hershberger, 90, Glendale, Ariz., died May 19. Spouse: Stanley Weaver. Parents: John J. and Lila Kreider Hershberger. Funeral: May 30 at Sunnyslope Mennonite Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

Wedel, Merlin Dale, 79, Hesston, Kan., May 22. Spouse: Earla Yost Wedel. Parents: Dewey and Evelyn Smith Wedel. Children: Bruce, Sondra Leatherman, Jay; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 29 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Wedel, Rosella Mary Schroeder, 87, Goessel, Kan., died May 20. Spouse: Peter H. Wedel (deceased). Parents: David I. and Mary Hiebert Schroeder. Children: Elaine Cox, Mary Funk, David; six grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; three step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 24 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

Wenhold, Dorothy M. Kulp, 90, Lansdale, Pa., died June 5. Spouse: J. Paul Wenhold (deceased). Parents: Jacob B. and Ada S. Moyer Kulp. Children: Larry, Diane Smith; four grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 8 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Yoder, Darvin, 87, Reedsville, Pa., died May 1. Spouse: Ada Yoder. Funeral: May 3 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville, Pa.

Yoder, Ernest L., 89, Goshen, Ind., died May 2. Spouse: Erma Faye Steingass Yoder (deceased). Parents: Melvin J. and Lillie Hostetler Yoder. Children: Marie Yoder Dyck, Jane Rodriguez, Edward L., six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Yoder, Flossie Lehman, 98, Goshen, Ind., died April 26. Spouse: Paul E. Yoder (deceased). Parents: Edwin C. and Mary Lehman. Children: Perry B., Janet S. Yoder, E. Charles, Jared B., Jonathan P., Mary A. Garber; 19 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at East Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Yoder, Pearl E. Bowen, 94, LaGrange, Ind., died March 27. Spouse: Joseph S. Yoder (deceased). Parents: David and Mabel Harmon Bowen. Children: Hazel Ann Bontrager, Rosalie Bontrager, Marilynn Hooley, Peggy Gillespie, Nita Gerwel, Jose S. Yoder, Jr., John Yoder; 21 grandchildren; 50 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 31 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Yoder, V. Ray, 91, Clarence Center, N.Y., died May 21. Spouse: Mary Anna Weber Yoder. Parents: Ira Levi and Minnie Pearl Brubaker Yoder. Children: Kathryn Yoder Ernest, James, Rachael Yoder Jarvis, Tim, John; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 26 at Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

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CORD | OBITUARIES

Beloved mother, grandmother and sister, **Lydia Henderson**, died December 18, 2009, at the age of 62. Having endured an 18-month battle with cancer, and with her family by her side in Enumclaw, Washington, Lydia left this life as serenely as she had lived it.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, December 23, at Greenwood Mennonite Church in Renton, Washington, where Lydia was an energetic member for the past 32 years.

Lydia was born July 10, 1947, in Anchorage to Charles and Phoebe Smith. She graduated from Washington High School in 1978. She attended college at the University of Washington, where she met and married Eugene Henderson. After graduation, they returned to Enumclaw.

Mrs. Henderson was a homemaker and spent many summers with her grandchildren in remote areas of the Alaskan wilderness.

She belonged to the Arboretum Foundation garden club and worked with various charities. Her interests included family, gardening, sewing and reading. She devoted much of her time and energy as a caregiver to family members, including her mother until she passed away at age 70.

Mrs. Henderson is survived by her sister, Virginia Coiro; brother, Carl Snow; 2 sons [illegible] their spouses, George and Eugene [illegible], Jeff and Connie Snow; and 13 [illegible]

[illegible] may be given to the American [illegible] her honor.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite,* call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Camp Friedenswald seeks an individual, couple or family to fill voluntary service positions as ***guests hosts***. Position requires an outgoing and hospitable personality and good communication skills. Must be available two weekends a month plus an additional week during each summer month. Housing and some meals provided. A commitment of at least one year is preferred. Visit our website at www.friedenswald.org to learn more about the camp. Call Portia at 269-476-9744 or email info@friedenswald.org for more information or to request an application.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Camp Friedenswald seeks an individual to fill a voluntary service position as ***guest group coordinator***. Position requires an outgoing and hospitable personality and good communication skills. Responsibilities include reservations, camp store and volunteer coordination. Stipend, housing and some meals provided. A commitment of at least one year is preferred. Visit our website at www.friedenswald.org to learn more about the camp. Call Portia at 269-476-9744 or email info@friedenswald.org for more information or to request an application.

Northern Virginia Mennonite Church (NVMC) located in Fairfax City, Va., is seeking a ***part-time interim pastor*** beginning in the summer 2012. Our candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and beliefs, and strong preaching, pastoral care and leadership skills. Some experience and an M.Div. degree are preferred. NVMC is a member of Virginia Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. We are a small, culturally diverse, urban congregation with growth potential through active young adults and outreach ministries. Resumes/questions should be emailed to the Pastoral Search Committee at hsuchin@netzero.net.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

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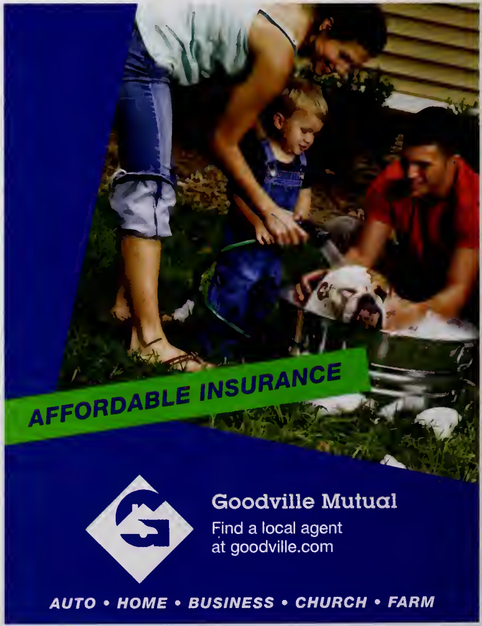
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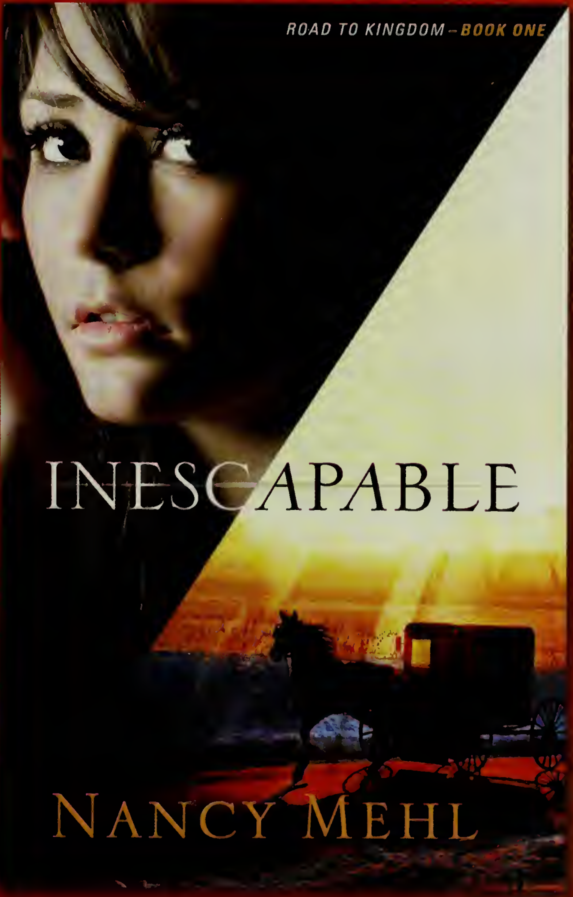

Inescapable by Nancy Mehl
ROAD TO KINGDOM # 1

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Lizzie Engel ran away from her Mennonite hometown and swore she'd never return. But five years later, a stalker and a string of threatening letters don't give her much choice. When she returns to Kingdom to plan her next move, she draws support from her old friend Noah Housler—and realizes she may not have left her Mennonite roots as far behind as she'd thought.

When the danger follows her home and her life is on the line, there's only one place left to run—to a Father whose love is inescapable.

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Politics on Palm Sunday and today

Jon Heinly is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite School.

I saw Palm Sunday in a different light this year. As I do each year, I imagined Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem. But as I pictured the scene on Palm Sunday, I didn't see the same happy throng waving palm branches and laying colorful cloaks in the path of a young donkey ridden by the Messiah. Instead, I imagined the riveting video footage of the masses gathered in Tahrir Square in the midst of the Egyptian uprising.

Is it possible that the emotion-filled images from the Arab Spring are more accurate depictions of the scene in Jerusalem? A faith-filled people living under the rule of a foreign regime gather as a miracle-working rabbi enters the holy city. People line the streets, calling on Jesus, "Hosanna, save us, Son of David." They cry out for him to reclaim his rightful kingship as the descendent of a great and mighty military leader.

> We, too, may be caught up in the misguided hopes for a political hero to solve the problems of our nation or our world.

Gatherings of urban masses are never to be taken lightly, as we have seen so vividly in the past year. This was a cause for concern for both the Roman rulers and the Jewish religious leaders. No one wanted a riot, especially during an important religious festival. Those types of situations had ended in tremendous bloodshed before. Caiaphas wisely recognized that it was in everyone's best interest for this one man to die than for everyone to pay the consequences of revolt. Rome wanted to maintain the peaceful submission of the people, and the Jewish religious leaders looked to prevent loss of life and to maintain their limited power and religious freedom.

But as Zechariah prophesied, Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem on the white war horse of conquest. Instead, he entered on an unbroken, young donkey. It was in stark contrast to the style of Roman rulers; it was satirical, underhanded, humorous, shocking, mocking the status quo and the standard approach of temporal powers. His odd style didn't end there. Later that week, instead of calling on angels to come to his defense or even allowing his disciples to fight on his behalf, he was taken into custody and put on trial.

Picture again the images of the protesters demanding change throughout the Arab Spring. Like them, the Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem were ready for change. Jesus was a great teacher who had shown tremendous power, even the ability to raise the dead. The people knew he was capable of overthrowing Roman rule. Why else would he include zealots in his band of followers? Their hopes were elevated, gladly receiving this new reign that had long been prophesied, for which they had waited and prayed.

These hopes climaxed in the so-called Triumphal Entry and in a matter of days became disillusionment, frustration and anger. They quickly discovered that Jesus was not coming to fulfill their plans and desires. The mob turned from praise to condemnation as their political hopes were dashed before their eyes. Disappointment, especially of that magnitude, is hard to deal with. It makes us angry.

The kingdom that Jesus was ushering in was not what they imagined.

The events of the Arab Spring were not the only reason I experienced Lent and Holy Week differently this year. I was also reflecting on our own political climate in the United States. I was thinking of the polarization over politics I see within Mennonite Church USA, both locally and nationally. With a presidential election coming in a few months, political hopes and anxieties rise to the surface again. I fear that, regardless of political affiliation, we, too, may be caught up in the misguided hopes for a political hero to solve the problems of our nation or our world.

As it turns out, the kingdom of God is, to borrow from Donald Kraybill, an "upside-down kingdom." Like those Jews who gathered, shouting hosanna to a triumphant Messiah, we, too, will have our hopes dashed if we call on a political hero to save us from the world's woes. Perhaps instead we should answer the call to follow a rabbi "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage" but "made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant." TM

FILM REVIEWS

Bernie (PG-13) is a funny film that's all the more outrageous because it's based on a true story. In a small Texas town, a mortician strikes up a friendship with a wealthy widow, though when he kills her, he goes to great lengths to create the illusion that she's alive. That we sympathize with him shows the complexity that marks human community.—*Gordon Houser*

Prometheus (R) is a kind of prequel to director Ridley Scott's classic *Alien* but not nearly as good. Still, it raises big issues as a team of explorers discovers a clue to the origins of mankind on Earth and goes to another planet to fight to save the future of the human race.—*gh*

DVD REVIEW

More Than Frybread (PG-13) is a mockumentary about a fake frybread contest in Flagstaff, Ariz., where 22 tribal representatives gather to compete in frybread-making. This comedy offers a fresh, light-hearted approach to Southwest American Indian culture. Unfortunately, the over-the-top, unrealistic food fight at the end of the frybread competition steps well outside the bounds of the mockumentary. But the end of the film emphasizes various tribes working in collaboration.—*Anna Groff*

MUSIC REVIEW

Wrecking Ball by Bruce Springsteen (Columbia, 2012, $12.49) gives voice to the sorrow and anger many feel who are suffering under the injustices of our economy. It also expresses the gospel (good news) of welcome offered by God's embrace. He has the unique position of being able to speak to a wide audience, and he uses that podium, his art, to feel the pain of those downtrodden and speak it. He also calls us to care for each other and stand together. And he sings of the hope that only faith can provide.—*gh*

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
WRECKING BALL

Books for instruction and inspiration

Here are some recent books you may not want to take to the beach, but they do provide instruction and inspiration.

One of the more important books so far this year is by a Mennonite author who has published articles in this magazine. *Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Eerdmans, 2012, $55) is hefty (668 pages) and more expensive than some books, but it's worth the cost.

Belousek makes a thorough argument that "the cross of Christ and the teachings of Jesus reveal to us the justice of God that transcends retribution for the sake of redemption." He makes a strong case against penal substitution, which he shows is neither supported by biblical texts nor the early church, even though it's held as sacrosanct by most evangelicals today.

Belousek goes on to show how the cross is the basis for the church's mission, which is a "whole-life commitment to God's redemptive purpose."

The book's thoroughness is a strength, but its length may dissuade some from reading it. It shouldn't.

Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality by Diana L. Hayes (Orbis Books, 2012, $22) is a fine introduction to its topic and provides a broad overview of its development in both Protestant and Catholic traditions.

Hayes distills various aspects of African American spirituality, as "contemplative, holistic, joyful and communitarian," where "there is no separation between the sacred and secular worlds." She offers a historical perspective, from its roots in Africa to the "fiery furnace" of slavery in the United States. She discusses the importance of Negro spirituals and the emergence of the black church. She focuses on the struggle for civil rights and the spirituality of African American women.

Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions by Arthur Paul Boers (Brazos Press, 2012, $17.99) considers reasons why life for many of us is not as fulfilling as we wished it was.

Boers, a Mennonite pastor and seminary teacher, uses stories and provides information to describe the dilemma we face in our fast-paced, impersonal society. He then calls us to "focal practices—activities that center, balance, focus and orient one's life."

"Most of us," Boers writes, "if we are willing to disconnect from devices that keep us entertained and in constant communication, can find room for things that give us the most energy and enrich our lives."

Lazarus, Come Forth! How Jesus Confronts the Culture of Death and Invites Us into the New Life of Peace by John Dear (Orbis Books, 2011, $20) is an extended meditation on the story of the raising of Lazarus in John 11.

Dear writes, "All of us are called to share the risen life here and now." His interpretation is instructive, but the writing shines when he tells stories.

Blind Spot: War and Christian Identity by Dorothy Garrity Ranaghan (New City Press, 2011, $11.95) is one more example of the growing literature from various Christian traditions opposing war and upholding peace.

Ranaghan is a founding member of a charismatic, ecumenical Christian covenant community. She uses arguments familiar to many Mennonites and writes, "Christians should heed the example of those who have found practical ways of seeking justice without tyranny."

Curiously, she says she argues "neither for patriotism nor for pacifism," as if the latter is to be avoided. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

A husband and his wife divorce amicably to pursue other interests. The man leaves to follow God's call in some kind of pastoral ministry, and he feels guilty for stealing 10 years of his ex-wife's life. The two remain good friends, and that is it. Nothing about marriage itself being a calling from God, a commitment to work out a shared journey, "til death do us part," through trials far greater than those cited. No sense of missed opportunity to endure difficulty and come through victorious on the other side.

The real tragedy in this story is its uninspiring vision of marriage. There are marriages beyond salvaging, but this story drops the bar far too low. We need married saints who fight the good fight through thick and thin to tell stories of transformation through faithfulness.—*Jon Hoover, Nottingham, England*

I am disturbed by the article in the May issue by Eric Litwiller on divorce. The biblical teaching on marriage, including marriage vows, is absent. It ignores biblical revelation in regard to marriage. It legitimizes the assumptions of our culture that erode a commitment to the marriage covenant.—*Grace Shenk, Mountville, Pa.*

Regarding the article by Eric Litwiller: I recognize the pain in Litwiller's experience as authentic and his questions as genuine. Many couples have times when they ask, Why did I marry this person? What do we have in common now?

I have come to believe that God did not create marriage to make us happy but to make us holy. Gary Thomas, the author of *Sacred Marriage*, has been influential to me in this. 1 John 4:12 says, "If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

I have come to believe that my marriage is the primary place where God has called me to learn how to love unconditionally and with a covenant love like he loves me. My experience of learning to love my wife when we have different opinions, different views, different priorities and different desires is what I believe God is using to change my character to be more like Jesus.

One of the primary places God wants me to learn to "take the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:7) is at home with my wife, with my hands in the dishwater or pulling out the vacuum. When our experience dictates our decisions about our marriages, I pray that we will return to Scripture to hear God's persistent call to learn to love with unconditional and covenant love like he does.

May our decisions about our marriages be guided directly by Scripture, and may we see the dry, painful and difficult times in our marriages as opportunities for God to do good work in us.—*Aaron Carlson, Manson, Iowa*

Sowing doubts about *Confession*

We appreciate our *Mennonite Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as a faithful interpretation and application of the Holy Scriptures. For example, Article 19 declares, "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life."

For us, as church leaders in the Weaverland-Northeast District of the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, this "we believe" in our confession of faith is an acknowledgement of authoritative truth.

The article by C. Norman Kraus ("A Resolution on Church Statements," May) is one example of thinking that raises doubts about our confession of faith. Against the tide of cultural change, we encourage Mennonite pastors and congregations to continue to uphold biblical truth, including the divine plan for marriage between one man and one woman (see Matthew 19:4-6).—*Tom Miller, Kenny Moore, David Pegarella, Jim Snyder, Jim Weick, Brian Martin, Bruce Sauder, Kenneth Martin and Carl Sensenig*

Significant change in vocabulary

Ron Adams' proposal in the June issue ("Bearing Witness to Our Missional God") to change our vocabulary from "missional" to "witnessing" raises a crucial concern. Shifts in vocabulary often indicate more significant changes in the way we conceptualize and operate in the church than we may at first realize. Our shift in vocabulary from "missionary and mission to the world" to "missional" is a kind of capstone to a generational change in the life of Mennonite Church USA. It actually indicates an implicit paradigm shift in our way of thinking about the nature of the church and its place in the social-political order that is already far along. It is a change in process that is taking place and has already caused numerous divisions in our brother/sisterhood.

I am not fond of the word "missional," and I am sympathetic with Adams' concern that we "get on God's bandwagon" (as one of my professors put it many years ago). But I wonder if "witnessing to" carries the freight of our "kingdom" responsibility.—*C. Norman Kraus, Denbigh, Va.*

Social media

I appreciate Gordon Houser's sharing of insights on social media and how that both reflects who we are and shapes who we are becoming ("Does Facebook Makes Us Lonely?" June). I was struck by the change in "loneliness" and the number of people living alone. It seems like an opportunity for the church to shine.—*Clarence Rempel, conference minister, Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA, North Newton, Kan.*

Correction: In the Robert Wert obituary (June), we incorrectly listed Esther Thelma Glick Wert as deceased. We regret the error and apologize.—*Editor*

Signposts: A diverse community

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.—Revelation 7:9 (TNIV)

The above verse from Revelation has led some of us in Mennonite Church USA to embrace a "Revelation 7:9 vision." That is, we long for a church that includes the many peoples who will be represented in heaven. At the same time we have this lofty vision, we live with the humbling realization that we often struggle to truly incorporate even a second language, racial/ethnic group or culture into the life of our church.

Stuart Murray's book *The Naked Anabaptist* is a serious attempt, with a touch of humor, to encourage a growing group of Anabaptist believers who do not wear typical Mennonite "cultural clothing." At the same time, it is an implicit call for "cradle" Mennonites to embrace a more diverse group of believers as true Anabaptists.

I occasionally hear "new" Mennonites say they feel like second-class members in their congregations. Ouch. A truly missional church eventually reflects the makeup of its neighborhood or nearby community—at least on the interchurch level. That's the focus of the seventh signpost on our missional journey:

Missional character trait: The members are engaged in a community that practices reconciliation and embraces the diversity that God has created here on earth.

Signpost: The church community is moving beyond restricted cultural expressions toward becoming a community that is more diverse in its racial, ethnic, age, gender and socioeconomic makeup.

One of the most diverse Mennonite congregations I have visited is Capital Christian Fellowship near Washington, D.C. Nelson Okanya, featured in this issue, was a pastor in this congregation for several years, including a short time as lead pastor before being called to his role at Eastern Mennonite Missions. Nelson told me that people from 45 different nations attended the congregation while he was pastor. That's diversity.

That doesn't mean congregations can't be missional without having people from many nations in attendance or that the primary measure of a congregation's missionary impulse is its demographic diversity.

Nevertheless, a primary emphasis in the New Testament is the thrust of the gospel to reach everyone in the world, regardless of their demographic category. This impulse has led to the great diversity of expression we see in the breadth of the Christian family across every continent. As part of God's worldwide family, Mennonite Church USA embraces people from many different nations—people who worship in more than 20 different languages.

I am sobered, however, when I observe that few of these new churches are represented at our conference assemblies on the area or national level. Those of us from the majority culture have not yet found a way to truly welcome or embrace the sweep of diversity in our assemblies.

Some view the desire for diversity as a misguided social agenda. Of course there are social dimensions to diversity because the gospel of Christ has profound social implications. But to the extent that our longing for diversity reflects God's call to reconciliation and repentance from cultural exclusiveness, as Revelation 7:9 says, it is a profoundly spiritual measure of our missional health.

I'm grateful that Eastern Mennonite Missions chose Nelson Okanya as its new president. His intercultural adeptness, like that of Mission Network's Stanley Green, can help our church embrace our missional calling, with all the diversity that God has in store for us. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

I occasionally hear 'new' Mennonites say they feel like second-class members in their congregations. Ouch.

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FROM THE EDITOR

A balance of authority

Everett J. Thomas

Stories of ministers performing same-sex covenanting ceremonies and a congregation under discipline dominate the news from area conferences this summer (see page 6). At first glance, it appears former General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) conferences are following their traditional practice of congregational autonomy, while a former Mennonite Church (MC) conference is following its traditional assumption of conference authority over matters of faith among member congregations.

But upon closer inspection, none of the groups is following its tradition completely. This may be evidence of a merging of the two traditions into something new for Mennonite Church USA.

In response to a pastor who performed three same-sex covenanting ceremonies last year, Central District Conference leader Lois Kaufmann says, "We have always had a conference polity that respects the discernment of its congregations as well as recognizes the diversity in our conference" (page 42).

In other words, congregations are given great latitude in their expressions of faith as long as the conference trusts the discernment process in the congregation.

We need a balance between complete congregational autonomy and the authority conferences need to discern matters of faithfulness.

But such autonomy is troubling to other CDC congregations, and the CDC ministerial committee's response to the matter may contribute to two congregations leaving CDC. This would not be a precedent. CDC's largest congregation, First Mennonite Church of Berne (Ind.), left CDC and joined the Ohio Mennonite Conference in 2010.

Another challenge to the GC tradition of congregational autonomy is playing out in Western District Conference. Four congregations have proposed a resolution requiring WDC congregations to align themselves with *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (see "Resolutions to Confront Differences," June). If this happens, presumably the four congregations will expect WDC to limit the amount of variance a congregation can have in its faith practices. As I understand it, such a use of the *Confession* would be new to WDC polity.

On the other side of the ledger, leaders in Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC), a former MC conference, are asking whether delegates can increase the amount of autonomy one of its member congregations may have. The congregation has been under discipline since 2005 because its membership guidelines allow for the full embrace of LGBTQ members.

Donna Mast, AMC conference minister, was interviewed about the situation by National Public Radio on May 2 (see "Allegheny Conference Leaders Recommend Reconciliation With Hyattsville," June).

"We're not looking to come to a place of total agreement," Mast told NPR. "What we're looking for is, Is it possible for us to work together and to remain together in fellowship, even though we disagree on this issue?"

In the 10 years since Mennonite Church USA was formed, diversity on this matter has been managed primarily by a few congregations switching membership to a different conference in which they find greater theological affinity.

But if Central District Conference, Western District Conference and Allegheny Mennonite Conference moderate their traditions, we may see the beginning of a polity that takes the best of both GC and MC traditions. Doing so would establish a balance between complete congregational autonomy and the authority conferences need to discern matters of faithfulness.—*ejt*

Note: Central District Conference was meeting as this issue of *The Mennonite* was being mailed on June 22.

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Giving in to the call

August 2012

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INSIDE

- Standing in chains at Alcatraz
- A special section on immigration
- Let's work for safe vaccines
- Using apps to change our behavior
- An unconventional convention

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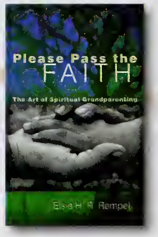

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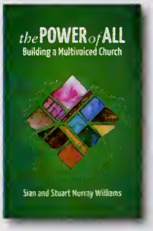
This book will help those who are in the last third of life understand and encourage the spiritual growth of those in the first third of life—whether the latter are biological grandchildren or other young people they mentor. Drawing from anecdotes from the lives of seniors and from the advice of experts in Christian formation, it offers resources for deepening one's own senior spirituality, and for understanding faith development across the life spectrum.



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The Power of All argues persuasively for congregations in which everyone is important for the well-being and growth of the community. The early churches were multivoiced, participative, and expectant that the Holy Spirit would speak through all members of the community.

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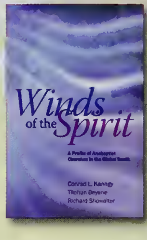
Ted Swartz and his Ted & Company TheaterWorks team are known for blending Bible stories with comedy and poignancy, and pushing the envelope on issues of faith and social justice. But who is Ted Swartz? In this memoir, Swartz's engaging humor blends with his own stories of triumph and tragedy, and helps readers understand their own sense of place and how they're shaped by those around them.

To be published September 14, 2012.



Winds of the Spirit

A Profile of Anabaptist Churches in the Global South

By Conrad Kanagy, Tilahun Beyene, and Richard Showalter

$13.99

In this groundbreaking study of 18,000 church members in ten countries, the authors make an unsettling claim: Anabaptist churches of the Global South have more in common with the church of the first three centuries than they do with contemporary Anabaptist churches in Europe and North America. They show how historical patterns of church renewal are repeating themselves today in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The study probes the sources and nature of renewal and growth and pushes readers to ask what these trends can teach the church of the North in their own quest for faithfulness and vitality.

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TheMennonite August 2012 | Volume 15, Number 8

CONTENTS

AMBS
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5
Nov. 18. 1918

12 Giving in to the call
—Sara Alvarez

15 Standing in chains at Alcatraz
—Duane C.S. Stoltzfus

20 A special section on immigration
Back to South Africa
—Wil LaVeist

23 A living testimony of the living God
—Anonymous

25 A selective welcome
—Anna Groff

28 Edible landscaping
—Sheryl Shenk

32 Western District amends one resolution, tables another—Gordon Houser

36 MCC moves files from MC USA Archives
—Laurie Oswald Robinson

37 Survey to shape future of Mennonite worship music—Michael Spory

38 Style through sewing, swapping and scavenging—Anna Groff

40 Young adults get interested in agriculture
—Serena Townsend

42 Noah's Ark reenactment draws 5,000—Melanie Hess

44 The debate about U.S. immigration policy
—Steven M. Nolt

ON THE COVER: Photo by Everett J. Thomas

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
47 For the Record
51 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

TheMennonite
August 2012 | Volume 15, Number 8

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The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1703
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

More on 'missional'

For some time now I have felt uncomfortable with our emphasis on being "missional" but have been unable to adequately verbalize the reasons for this discomfort. Ron Adams' article "Bearing Witness to Our Missional God" (June) provides thought-provoking insights into the implications of the word. He suggests that the concept of "bearing witness" replace the ill-defined, overused "missional." He points out that the "word missional feeds our anxiety. It tells us we must find out where God is and what God is doing and lend a hand."

We attempt to "lend a hand" when we read Conrad Kanagy's writing as a "prophecy announcing our demise" and then rush to plant more churches. "Rather than trusting that the Spirit is active in our grayest congregations, we turn away from them in embarrassment as evidence of our approaching end."

We use the term "missional" with the inference that the current generation of Mennonites has not been faithful enough. This judgmental undertone bothers me the most. The term "bearing witness" better expresses the continuity of faithful discipleship through the ages.—*Ruth Anne Abraham, Austin, Texas*

Thanks to Ron Adams for stirring up the debate over the word "missional." I was part of the joint mission board group that asked that this focus become part of the new denomination when we voted to merge in 2001. There has been much debate, confusion and anxiety over the term, but I submit that is not necessarily bad.

In my efforts at being a missional pastor within Mennonite Church USA, I have come to believe that "missional" is to the church what restorative justice is to the criminal justice system—or housing is to homelessness. In each case, systemic and deep change is called for. This takes time.

"Bearing witness" as Ron Adams proposes is an excellent concept, but it should remain under the missional umbrella. Our brothers and sisters in Presbyterian Church USA have also embraced the missional journey, so I urge us to take this hybrid approach. I also concur with Ron that opening a conversation about missional identity and activity by trying to define it is counterproductive. It's the stories of ordinary disciples bearing witness in their everyday lives, from across the street to around the world, that transform us.—*Jim S. Amstutz, Akron, Pa.*

Boycott election?

I empathize with Berry Friesen's frustration for the failure in many ways of the world's political system (May). But frankly, I don't know what Friesen expects—utopia or his view of policy to always prevail?

The world's view is many times not our Anabaptist understanding. However, we all might be grateful that Jesus, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, the Berrigan brothers and others—while feeling frustrated, to say the least—did not withdraw from the system but witnessed to it and challenged it nonviolently toward many ultimate successes.

John Roth took his advice further in his group of essays on choosing not to vote, published several years ago. If Roth or Friesen chooses to abstain, that is a valid position to take and is certainly valid in a democratic system. However, I'm not sure recommending such a choice is good advice for our community. While I love, respect and value the Amish, I'm not sure the not-voting stance is appropriate for Mennonites in this century. I would not presume to know what Jesus would do, but I'm sure from what we know of Jesus' life, Christians such as Martin Luther King Jr., Jimmy Carter, Nelson Mandela and others vote or voted.—*Caryl M. Guth, Pearl River, La.*

Social media makes us lonely?

I appreciated Gordon Houser's insights on social media and how that both reflects who we are and shapes who we are becoming (Mediaculture, May). I was struck by the change in "loneliness" and the number of people living alone. It seems like an opportunity for the church to shine.—*Clarence Rempel, North Newton, Kan.*

Correction

Nice article on Nelson Okanya (July). The opening paragraph states that he played with the children of the missionary church planters in his home area. Actually, it would be the grandchildren of the first missionaries.

J. Clyde and Alta Shenk opened the work in Kenya making their base where Nelson's family was from. Clyde and Alta's son, David, and Grace (she had a letter to the editor in the same issue) Shenk were based in Nairobi when Nelson's father went to Nairobi to find work.

Nelson is just a tad younger than David's youngest son, Tim, and would have played with David's children. *—Dan Wenger, Lititz, Pa.*

Large doses of judgment, ridicule

I first want to commend Eric Litwiller for being so transparent and open about his divorce ("Handling Divorce," May). Honestly expressing our spiritual journeys to others is what fosters growth and provides insight. Doing so, however, often opens one up to judgment and ridicule. Eric took that risk, and the judgment came in large doses in the July issue.

One letter writer states that Eric was "rejoicing in tearing apart his marriage vows" and "upholding divorce as being glorious."

But I heard Litwiller express that divorce is bad, that it was a major crisis of faith for him, that he struggles with overwhelming guilt and that he struggles with doubts that threaten his relationship with God. I totally missed the rejoicing and the upholding of divorce as glorious.

Another writer states that this "husband and wife divorced amicably to pursue other interests." I give them both a lot of credit for being amicable throughout the process.

But Litwiller was not just pursuing "other interests." Litwiller found himself to be truly miserable in life because he had lost his way. What he was pursuing was a path back to a closer relationship with God. And that relationship caused his values to change, his perspective to change, his goals to change and his entire outlook on life to change. That is called transformation, and we should all rejoice in a soul who found his way back to the faith he once knew. But his transformation and change did not automatically bring about the same transformation and change in his spouse. Salvation happens to individuals, not couples.

For years Mennonites have preached 2 Corinthians 6:14 and admonished members against being "unequally yoked." This marriage was no longer a team. It was headed in two different directions. One letter to the editor suggested they should have "fought the good fight through thick and thin." I have witnessed some of those marriages. The fights weren't so good, and

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Those of us who heard her story at the Pittsburgh 2011 convention remember the troubled life Madelina Maldinado (page 12) lived before becoming a Christian. Now she and her husband are successful pastors, and next year she will become chair of the Mennonite Mission Network board of directors.

"I was a really rough, tough person," she says. "I challenged everything," she says. "I wanted proof and I wanted to understand why things were the way they were."

Now pastoring with her husband, David, at Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla., she and the congregation have ministered to many undocumented residents, some of whom end up back in Guatemala.

Immigration issues are a major theme for this issue, with a special section beginning on page 20. The first story is about Karen and Flinn Ranchod, pastors from South Africa who were forced to leave their work in Virginia. An anonymous young woman, brought to this country from Mexico when she was a baby, describes how her faith helps her triumph over the injustices in her life (page 23). A Chinese pastor from Indonesia describes how he was able to get U.S. citizenship just five years ago and the difficulties people without documents face when they do not have the resources to engage the U.S immigration system (page 25).

We publish this special section, an analysis of U.S. immigration law (page 44) and an article about convention planning (page 33) because immigration and justice issues will be a significant part of the Phoenix 2013 convention (see page 56).

Finally, Duane Stoltzfus (page 15) provides excerpts from his C. Henry Smith Peace Lecture presented at Bluffton (Ohio) University on Feb. 28 and at Goshen (Ind.) College on March 12.—*Editor*

Geiser, partner killed in Afghanistan

ELKHART, Ind.—According to a July 24 news release from Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church, Al Geiser, 65, of Kidron was shot and killed July 23 in rural Afghanistan. A close Afghan friend and business partner and another Afghan co-worker were also killed. Geiser was returning from a job on a hydroelectric project as an independent businessman. His wife, Gladys, resides in Kabul, where she teaches in an Afghan school. Their two children reside in the United States.

"Responding to a call on their lives in February 2000," the release said, "the Geisers went to Afghanistan with joy and purpose and have grown to love the people. The Geisers and many of their Afghan friends consider each other family. ... The Geisers were aware of and accepted the risks in their work for peace in Afghanistan."

Geiser and his business partner, Shukur, were kidnapped in August 2008 and held for 56 days. According to an Associate Press report on Oct. 22, 2008, U.S. Special Forces soldiers freed them during a nighttime mission in which several insurgents were killed.

Geiser will be buried in Afghanistan in a Christian cemetery following a Christian service. A memorial service will be held in Kidron at a later date. —*Everett J. Thomas*

Fire on Northern Cheyenne Reservation largely ignored

WHITERIVER, Ariz.—While the Ash Creek Fire in Montana burned far fewer structures than the fire in Colorado Springs, Colo., Erica Littlewolf says, it caused significant devastation to the land and people of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

According to GreatFallsTribune.com, the fire burned about 16 homes and 22 other structures. However, the land itself is precious to many of the Cheyenne nation who "live off the land," using it for hunting, fishing, ranching, farming and more, said Littlewolf on July 11. Littlewolf is a Cheyenne tribal member from the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and grew up in Busby, Mt. She now lives in Albuquerque, N.M., and serves as Mennonite Central Committee's indigenous vision center coordinator. Littlewolf said she feels called to the justice issues surrounding the fire.

"Disasters are unfortunate, but it seems like they hit communities of poverty differently than communities of affluence," she said. "The lack of news coverage doesn't help the issues."

According to Littlewolf, mainstream society values structures and homes more than land, and that is why she says the Colorado Springs fire received more press and attention.—*Anna Groff*

Bluffton University photo

Chinese educators visit Bluffton University

Kevin Nickel (left), Bluffton (Ohio) University's vice president for fiscal affairs, talks to members of a visiting delegation from China West Normal University during a tour of Bluffton's new Sommer Center for Health and Fitness Education. The 60,000-square-foot facility, which will include space for academics as well as athletics, is scheduled to open this fall.—*Bluffton University*

Planting a church? Keep your day job

ELKHART, Ind.—If you feel called to plant a church in these tough economic times, it's a good idea to maintain another job. It's likely that a small church of less than 100 members—Mennonite Church USA recommends having at least four to five households to begin a church plant—will not be able to support a full-time pastor.

However, holding a second job in addition to being the pastor of a church plant or an established small church has benefits beyond the income, says Mauricio Chenlo, denominational minister for church planting for both Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA.

Working outside of the church offers advantages for effective ministry to those sitting in the pews. Bivocational pastors' experiences working in professions similar to those of their church members can inform their preaching in ways that often make their sermons more relevant, he said.

Bivocational pastoring would be much more difficult and not recommended in a larger congregation of perhaps 200 or more members whose needs the pastor must be available to address, Chenlo said. However, for the majority of Mennonite congregations and church plants—which typically have fewer than 100 members—bivocational ministry is a logical alternative.

Chenlo encourages area conferences to provide support for bivocational pastors by offering aid in finding a job, housing, and by helping them connect to the Corinthian Plan, Mennonite Church USA's health plan.

Chenlo has been a bivocational pastor for the past 20 years. He was an associate pastor in his native Argentina during the economic crisis of 2001. He became an expert at helping church members navigate the loss not only of income but of self-esteem and hope as a result of losing their factory jobs after decades of steady employment.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

MCC extends food distribution in Mexico

WINNIPEG, Man.—More than 1,000 families in Durango State, Mexico, are receiving food and blankets as part of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)'s response to widespread drought.Packets containing beans, rice, oil, corn, lentils, noodles and sugar will be distributed to families in the villages and hills in the Nuevo Ideal area. Families will also receive canned meat and MCC blankets.

This comes on top of projects underway for residents of the Low German-speaking Durango Colony, which was established 130 kilometers (80 miles) northwest of the city of Durango in 1924 by Old Colony Mennonites coming from Canada.

About 250 households in Durango Colony are receiving food packages. Sixty-four families are receiving cattle feed to help maintain their herds. And 47 families will be provided with seeds so they can plant a crop.

Parts of Mexico face what some call the worst drought in 70 years. Crop yields last year were below normal, and many farmers in the colony have already sold their cattle to generate income. Farmers that still have livestock pay high prices for feed.—*MCC*

Brian Denlinger

Friends in Peru

While visiting the San Jeronimo Mennonite Church in Peru, Kyle Denlinger (right) poses with his friend Benjamin Sullca Mamani before playing "taps"—a game involving small plastic circles, which the children frequently played after church.—*Eastern Mennonite Missions*

MennoMedia celebrates its first year

HARRISONBURG, Va., NEWTON, Kan., ELKHART, Ind., and WATERLOO, Ont.—On July 1, the publishing agency of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada celebrated its first year of publishing as a new organization. MennoMedia's first year included merging two historic entities—Mennonite Publishing Network and Third Way Media—while also relocating its main office and warehouse and navigating with new leadership.

The new organization brings together the resources of print publishing and electronic media, and this fall it unveils its first such products. A new curriculum, *Real Life, Real Families*, will feature both audio and print materials and has been developed out of the successful Shaping Families radio program, which broadcasts on 20 stations across the United States and Canada.

MennoMedia's curriculum and resource materials have also been used significantly in congregations across the denomination. *Gather 'Round*, the Bible curriculum for children and youth copublished with Brethren Press, is being used in about 850 congregations, and the 2012 vacation Bible school curriculum, *Take Me to the Water: God's Love Flows*, required three additional printings due to high demand.
—*MennoMedia*

STAR training helps aids peacebuilding workers

MINNEAPOLIS—The Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute hosted its fourth Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) training June 20-24. Twenty participants representing Colombian, Somali, Vietnamese, LGBT, African American and Caucasian communities included a broad spectrum of faith traditions. They joined to unpack various types of trauma, understand the mind/brain and body cyclical links between victimhood and aggression, and apply principles and practices of restorative justice, conflict transformation and nonviolent peacebuilding to maximize the potential for individual and community healing, reconciliation and empowerment.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference awarded the Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute a $1,300 grant to provide scholarship assistance for CPMC leaders and laypersons who want to attend STAR in Minneapolis but who require funding assistance for the $650 tuition.—*Donna L. Minter*

Everence responds to Supreme Court ruling

GOSHEN, Ind.—Everence responded June 28 to the Supreme Court ruling on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and said it will continue to work with members and groups it serves for the implementation of the law, while mindful of how federal elections could impact the overall law and its further regulations.

Members with a fully insured individual health plan or employers with a small group health plan from Everence will not experience any immediate changes to benefits or coverage.
—*Everence*

Prayers and burdens

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

I wish I could say that people come to church for my sermons. The pews are filled instead because we want to be there to hear the prayers, sharing aloud our joys and concerns, bringing them before God and receiving each voice as an invitation into the body of Christ. Through prayer our lives are mingled, becoming part of one another. For if one member suffers, all suffer together with him, and if one member rejoices, all rejoice with her.

One person celebrates the news of the birth of a healthy baby, and all share in the joy of new life. Another mourns the death of a friend, and all share in the pain of loss. Someone reminds God, and us, to provide for those who are hungry and can't afford to buy food, and for people in our community who do not have housing.

Depending on the Sunday, our prayer time lasts longer than the sermon—gratitude for a new job, anguish at the bad reports from a parent's losing battle against cancer, distress due to a lack of work, appreciation for gestures of kindness, despair at the return of depression.

As we pray, I can't help but be drawn into a communion of tears with friends whose vulnerability displays such courage.

> The pews are filled … because we want to be there to hear the prayers, sharing aloud our joys and concerns, bringing them before God and receiving each voice as an invitation into the body of Christ.

"We thank our Lord that our burdens are staggered," Kate Roberts prayed a few weeks ago, "so that we might have the strength to carry another's weight."

The church is a people of staggered burdens, as Kate put it, a community where those who bear much pain do not have more than they can bear, and those who have little can share the load.

Recently a church member shared with us the burden she had been carrying for the past three years.

"I had lost all hope, so death seemed like the logical option," she said.

After three years of failed suicide attempts, through our ordinary congregational life she slowly began to feel God's affirmation of her life.

"The love and grace you shared with me has restored my faith and hope," she testified. "Not only have I stayed out of the hospital for more than a year; I am happy and at peace for the first time in years."

I think about her words whenever I start wondering why we keep on meeting as a congregation. It takes plenty of work from a lot of people to make church happen every week. But all of it is worthwhile if someone decides not to kill herself, despite the darkness of this world, and instead to live another day, another month, another year because somehow she has felt God's affirmation and love through our lives of worship.

God's mission involves the maintenance of communities that sustain life in the midst of a culture of death.

"I have come that they may have life," Jesus said, "and have it abundantly."

"As our souls wait and as our bodies whither," Kate Roberts closed her prayer, "might we feel the comfort of Christ, might we see glimpses of restoration."

In the silence after her words, my mind was flooded with stories of withering bodies, stories from the life of our congregation and our communities. But I also felt the comfort of Christ; the weight of the world would not crush the life of God growing in us; for, in the words of Menno Simons, we are "flesh of Christ's flesh and bone of his bone … one with Christ in Spirit, love, and life."

Peace is a way of life that has everything to do with how we share burdens and pray for one another. Yes, to be a peace church involves us in protesting against war and violence wherever they appear in our world. Yet such a position flows from a culture of worship where life is affirmed as we rest in the peace of Christ—the Christ who comes in our communion, in our fellowship, in our joy and despair, as the Spirit enables us to expose our vulnerability to a group of people who won't abandon us in our time of need. TM

New technology and the global church

In the spring of 1751, two Frenchmen, Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert, published the first volume of the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers.* When their project was completed 21 years later, the *Encyclopédie* boasted 28 volumes with 71,818 articles covering the full breadth of human knowledge. In its time, the *Encyclopédie* revolutionized the dissemination of knowledge. It not only put an enormous amount of expert information into the hands of ordinary people but its alphabetical arrangement of topics meant that individual users were free to impose their own interpretation on the information they gathered. Anyone over 30 can recall going to the *World Book* or *Britannica* for information on a high school research paper or to resolve a dispute about Trivial Pursuit.

For those under 30, however, the bound volumes of an encyclopedia belong to the age of the dinosaurs. Today, our standard sources of information come from the Internet, especially from Wikipedia. Launched in January 2001, Wikipedia offers readers more than 22 million articles (more than 3.9 million in English), with editions in 285 languages. It, too, has revolutionized the dissemination of knowledge.

In contrast to the *Encyclopédie*, however, Wikipedia takes up no space on the bookshelf. And rather than relying on the expertise of a few scholars, the information it offers draws on the local knowledge of millions of users. Once the object of general academic scorn, recent studies suggest that Wikipedia is at least as accurate as standard encyclopedias. In a global age, Wikipedia offers a new model for generating and sharing information.

Although I tend to be skeptical about technology in general, I have been struck by the potential that a "wiki" approach to knowledge has for the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church. In the late 1950s, a team of Mennonite historians—led by Harold and Elizabeth Bender, Cornelius Krahn and dozens of other scholars—undertook a massive initiative to compile the four-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. Supplemented by a fifth volume in 1990, the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* represented the fruition of several generations of scholarship and quickly became the standard reference work for information on Anabaptist-Mennonite history and theology. Several years ago, a visionary group led by Sam Steiner at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario, converted the text of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* into electronic format and posted it on the Internet as the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO). Based on the Enlightenment model of the *Encyclopédie*, GAMEO has since become an extremely useful research tool—available to anyone in the world with an Internet connection.

But the Wikipedia model of shared information—nonhierarchical in structure, global in scope and anchored in the grassroots knowledge of many people—may be even better suited to an Anabaptist ecclesiology. The Global Anabaptist Wiki (anabaptistwiki.org), an initiative of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen (Ind.) College, is an experiment for the global church. The site offers a place for members of every Anabaptist-Mennonite group in the world to describe themselves in their own words. It also allows for books, articles, newsletters, stories, bibliographies, web links and images to be posted in multiple languages. Recently, contributions to a new "Anabaptist Dictionary of the Bible" have begun to appear on the site, along with a host of sources related to martyrdom, Mennonite ecumenical involvements and the texts of Anabaptist-Mennonite catechisms, confessions of faith and church position statements. Eventually, the wiki could serve the church as a global archives that simultaneously preserves digital information for the future while making it accessible to everyone else.

The newly created Global Anabaptist Wiki is not without problems. Not everyone has access to the Internet, and opening the site to ordinary people could lead to misinformation or conflicting stories. Encyclopedias still have their advantages. In fact, recognizing the value of both approaches, GAMEO and Anabaptistwiki recently entered into a formal partnership, with both initiatives developing a closer relationship with Mennonite World Conference.

Ultimately, GAMEO and the Anabaptistwiki are tools, not ends in themselves. But the world is changing. And as our church becomes increasingly global in character, we will need to explore new ways of gathering and sharing information.

Consider contributing some of your local knowledge to the Global Anabaptist Wiki (www.anabaptistwiki.org). TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

The wiki could serve the church as a global archives that preserves digital information for the future while making it accessible to everyone else.

A wake-up call for American men

Why is it that most American men refuse to get help when they suffer from depression? In their article "Why Won't Men Get Help?" in *Pacific Standard* (July/August), David Freed and Betsy Bates Freed tell stories of specific men and point to alarming statistics about men who suffer from depression and other maladies.

In 1998, the Freeds write, "about 1.47 of every 100 men in the United States sought outpatient help for depression; by 2007, it was 2.12 men per 100, according to a study sponsored by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality."

And most of those who do go for help prefer pharmaceuticals to "talk therapy." In 1998, 56.2 percent of those who sought help used the latter treatment; in 2007, that percentage dropped to 42.5. And those who chose pills increased from 68.8 percent in 1998 to 73.3 percent in 2007.

This failure of the vast majority of men to seek help has dire consequences, especially since the economic recession. "Suicide overtook blood poisoning to become the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2009," the Freeds write. And men account for nearly 80 percent of suicides in the United States today.

Those rates have been rising in the past 25 years, and the rise in recent years of overall male unemployment will likely send them higher, unless something changes.

Why are men so reluctant to seek help from professional therapists? It's something they learn growing up. It turns out they aren't born that way. "Studies show that most male babies actually start out more emotionally expressive than females," the Freeds write. But by age 2, boys are less verbally expressive than girls.

Psychologists have a word for the "strong silent type" masculinity that many American men hold on to: "normative male alexithymia," which literally translates as "without words for emotions."

Another reality men face who do go for help, the Freeds write, is that "nearly three in every four licensed psychologists who hold doctorate degrees are female, as are almost 80 percent of master's-level students in psychology-related fields of study." This can pose both an advantage and a disadvantage for male patients.

On the one hand, men may regard a woman as "more nurturing, empathetic and less threatening." On the other hand, "female psychotherapists … run the risk of alienating men by trying to counsel them, however subtly, to be like them."

Once men do get into counseling, they tend to do better. In fact, research has shown that men benefit from talk therapy just as much, if not more, than women.

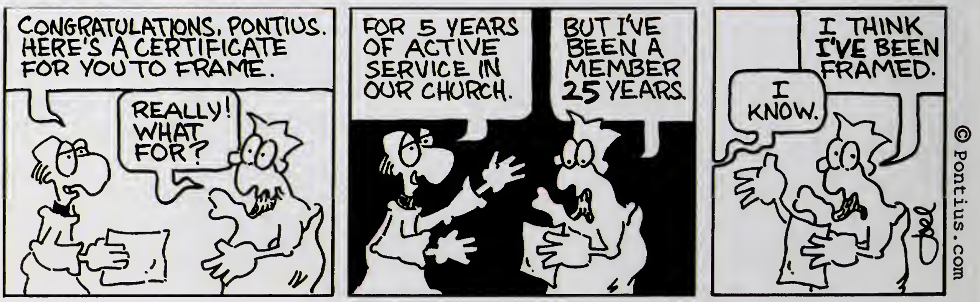
I mentioned this to some friends of mine who are therapists, and they thought this made sense, since most women are used to talking about their feelings, so therapy isn't as new an experience as it is for most men.

Men with cancer also don't usually ask for or get as much support as women. Betsy Bates Freed in her article "Did You Hear the One About the Guy with Prostate Cancer?" compares breast cancer and prostate cancer, "two diseases that are diagnosed in almost equal numbers each year in the U.S., and take a similar emotional as well as physical toll. As of May, published, peer-reviewed studies on 'breast cancer and support' outnumbered those on 'prostate cancer and support' by 56,000."

The macho mentality that we shouldn't ask for help may be American, but it's far from being Christian. We men need to encourage one another to talk about our problems and seek help when we need it.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


CONGRATULATIONS, PONTIUS. HERE'S A CERTIFICATE FOR YOU TO FRAME.
REALLY! WHAT FOR?
FOR 5 YEARS OF ACTIVE SERVICE IN OUR CHURCH.
BUT I'VE BEEN A MEMBER 25 YEARS.
I THINK I'VE BEEN FRAMED.
I KNOW.
Joel
© Pontius.com

> “Six companies dominate TV news, radio, online, movies and publishing. Another eight or nine control most of the nation’s newspapers.”
>
> —*Columbia Journalism Review*

Pastors’ concern for others may harm themselves

Most members of the clergy are taught to put the physical and spiritual needs of others first, but that self-denial may be harmful to their own health, according to a new Duke University study. Studies of United Methodist pastors in North Carolina found high rates of chronic disease and depression, and researchers worry it can be difficult to convince clergy to seek help.—*Religion News Service*

Why trees matter

Trees are on the front lines of our changing climate. And when the oldest trees in the world suddenly start dying, it’s time to pay attention.

North America’s ancient alpine bristlecone forests are falling victim to a voracious beetle and an Asian fungus. In Texas, a prolonged drought killed more than 5 million urban shade trees last year and another half-billion trees in parks and forests. In the Amazon, two droughts have killed billions more. The common factor has been hotter, drier weather.

3,215
daily high temperature records set in the United States in June
—Associated Press

We have underestimated the importance of trees. They are not merely pleasant sources of shade but a potentially major answer to some of our most pressing environmental problems.

A 2008 study by researchers at Columbia University found that more trees in urban neighborhoods correlate with a lower incidence of asthma.

In Japan, researchers have long studied what they call “forest bathing.” A walk in the woods, they say, reduces the level of stress chemicals in the body and increases natural killer cells in the immune system, which fight tumors and viruses. Studies in inner cities show that anxiety, depression and even crime are lower in a landscaped environment.

675
shipping containers are lost at sea each year.

2.3 billion
plastic fragments flow into the sea every 72 hours from the two main rivers that drain Los Angeles’ watershed.
—*Pacific Standard*

Trees also release vast clouds of beneficial chemicals. On a large scale, some of these aerosols appear to help regulate the climate; others are anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-viral.Trees are also the planet’s heat shield. They keep the concrete and asphalt of cities and suburbs 10 or more degrees cooler.—*Jim Robbins, author of* The Man Who Planted Trees.

8 predictors for future church conflict

1. **Recent church fights**
2. **Shrinking attendance**
3. **Sermons last 11-20 minutes**
4. **Church has almost no men**
5. **Pastor is a woman**
6. **Pastor is young**
7. **Congregants are old**
8. **A slight majority are poor**

—*Christianity Today*

Silence and the Spirit

Flora Slosson Wuellner witnessed a congregational business meeting in which deliberations ceased every half hour, when the congregation sat in silence for five minutes, attending to the Spirit’s promptings. People took turns holding a stopwatch. After the silent periods, “the tone of the talk and planning changed, attitudes changed, disagreements were handled differently, fresh options were envisioned,” Slosson Wuellner says. —*Christian Century*

Christianity good for poor, bad for sex

Americans feel the “Christian faith” has a positive impact on help for the poor and raising children with good morals, according to a new poll, but it gets a bad rap on its impact on sexuality in society. In a new study conducted by Grey Matter Research, more than 1,000 American adults were asked if the Christian faith had a positive, negative, or no real impact on 16 different areas of society, such as crime, poverty and the role of women in society.—*Religion News Service*

World’s heaviest countries

(in average pounds per person)

1. **United States: 180**
2. **Kuwait: 171**
3. **Qatar: 169**
4. **Croatia: 168**
5. **United Arab Emirates: 167**
6. **Egypt: 163**

—*Time* (world average is 137)

Giving in to the call

Madeline Maldonado

© Mennonite Mission Network

Madeline Maldonado follows the call to pastoral ministry.

by Sara Alvarez

On Christmas Day 1989, Madeline Maldonado sat at her sister-in-law's church. Her life seemed to be unrolling like the typical American's: She was married, pregnant and educated—in airplane mechanics. ▶

But she was unhappy.

Her husband, David Maldonado, drank and smoked, so she struggled with whether or not to stay and raise their child in that home. This wasn't her first church service, but she usually left after the singing. That day was different, though. She was searching for answers, and when the pastor gave an altar call, Madeline went forward.

"My heart was in turmoil and I knew I needed something," says Madeline. "It was a breaking down of all my toughness and everything I thought I was, and I was crying uncontrollably."

Madeline remembers that service as the start of a transformation in her life that led her to where she is now, co-pastor of Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación.

A few months after that Christmas service, Madeline and David moved closer to his parents, and together they answered another altar call at Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación. They dedicated their lives to the service of Christ.

Tough questions

As Madeline delved into Christianity, she asked many hard questions of her mentor, Martelina Pacheco.

"When I first came to Christ I was a really rough, tough person," says Madeline.

The sexual and physical abuse she had suffered through as a child had made her rebellious and questioning. "I challenged everything," she says. "I wanted proof and I wanted to understand why things were the way they were."

Slowly, she understood more about the Christian faith, and she and David became more involved in the church. David moved up to co-pastor and by 1994 was ordained and became the lead pastor of the church.

Madeline supported David as he went into the ministry and found that she enjoyed working with him and helping him. She realized that she had many of the qualities of a pastor but resisted the feeling that she was called into ministry because she had always been taught that women could not be pastors.

"Other people would see the gift in me," says Madeline. "One of the pastors came to me and said, 'You know what, Madi, you have a pastor's heart.' But I had the Hispanic woman's mentality from an old church that women only taught Sunday school."

Despite Madeline's doubts on her calling, her desire to help others led her to become a pastor and leader in the church.

"I developed a passion for the homeless," says Madeline. "I started a ministry where I would pick them up on Sunday mornings for church, let them shower at our church, offer them hot food after the service and then drop them off afterward."

David suggested that she should start preaching and praying in church, since she started this ministry, so she did.

But even as she preached and prayed on some Sundays, Madeline resisted the label of pastor. It took a health crisis for Madeline to admit that she felt called to be a pastor, not just to serve as a pastor's wife.

It took a health crisis for Madeline to admit that she felt called to be a pastor, not just to serve as a pastor's wife.

"I had a fast-growing tumor in my chest," says Madeline. "At first the doctors didn't know the cause and thought I might not have much time. This encounter caused me to reflect on my life and I realized I had been ignoring the call."

David also bought her the book *Woman You are Called and Anointed* for her to read during her biopsy. This book encouraged her to examine the calling she felt in her life.

"It was a meaningful moment," says Madeline. "God was really speaking to me and putting things in order."

At the same time, without her knowledge, the elders of the church had sent in the form for her ordination to Southeast Mennonite Conference. By the time she realized what had happened, she was ready to acknowledge that God wanted her to become a leader in the church.

Husband and wife team

Madeline finally became a licensed pastor in 2000 and has pastored at the Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación with David ever since.

Despite society's perception that husbands and wives should not work in the same place, Madeline enjoys working with David.

"We balance each other well," says Madeline. "He's quieter and thinks things through, while I ask questions and speak up when he's quiet. He'll also have the ideas, and I'll be the one to put things together and put the idea into action."

The couple has put various ideas into action in order to fulfill the needs of their congregation and further the reach of their ministry.

One of Madeline's passions is for immigrant rights, and she has many opportunities to support ▶

Madeline Maldonado in a traditional Guatemalan dress
Photo provided

immigrants at her church, where most of the members are immigrants.

"I like to work within the community, connecting people with lawyers to defend them," says Madeline. "If people get hurt at work, and some of them are undocumented, they'll call regarding what to do. You just work and help when a need arises."

Madeline's passion to help bridge the gap between Spanish-speaking church members and the English-speaking United States led her to become part of the Iglesia Menonita Hispana, an organization within Mennonite Church USA that helps facilitate communication between Spanish-speaking pastors and conference ministers. They also function to help educate pastors and meet needs that may arise.

Madeline and David also started the Peniel Instituto Biblico in Chiul, Guatemala, the home country for some of their church members. They started the program about 10 years ago at the request of a local pastor who had studied with them in Florida.

Madeline and David went down every four months or so and educated congregations and local pastors in theology and issues that concern churches. The couple also makes it a point to visit old church members who have since returned to Guatemala.

"One meaningful experience was seeing Carlos Francisco Tevalan Itzep," says Madeline. "When he first came to our church, he was young and uneducated. He started coming to our Bible institute in Florida and worked hard and wanted to become educated."

"Now he's back in Guatemala, where he is a nurse. When we saw him, he came to us and wanted us to understand the impact we made on his life; he was crying."

Madeline loves these moments when she can see that the pastoral work she's doing is making a difference in people's lives. They are the reason she loves being a pastor.

> We're here for them, and I love that I get to watch people grow, both in age and spiritually.
> —Madeline Maldonado

"I just got a call yesterday from a girl that grew up in the church," says Madeline. "When she called she said, 'I know that even though I don't come to church all the time, I know I can call you, and you're always there and will listen.'

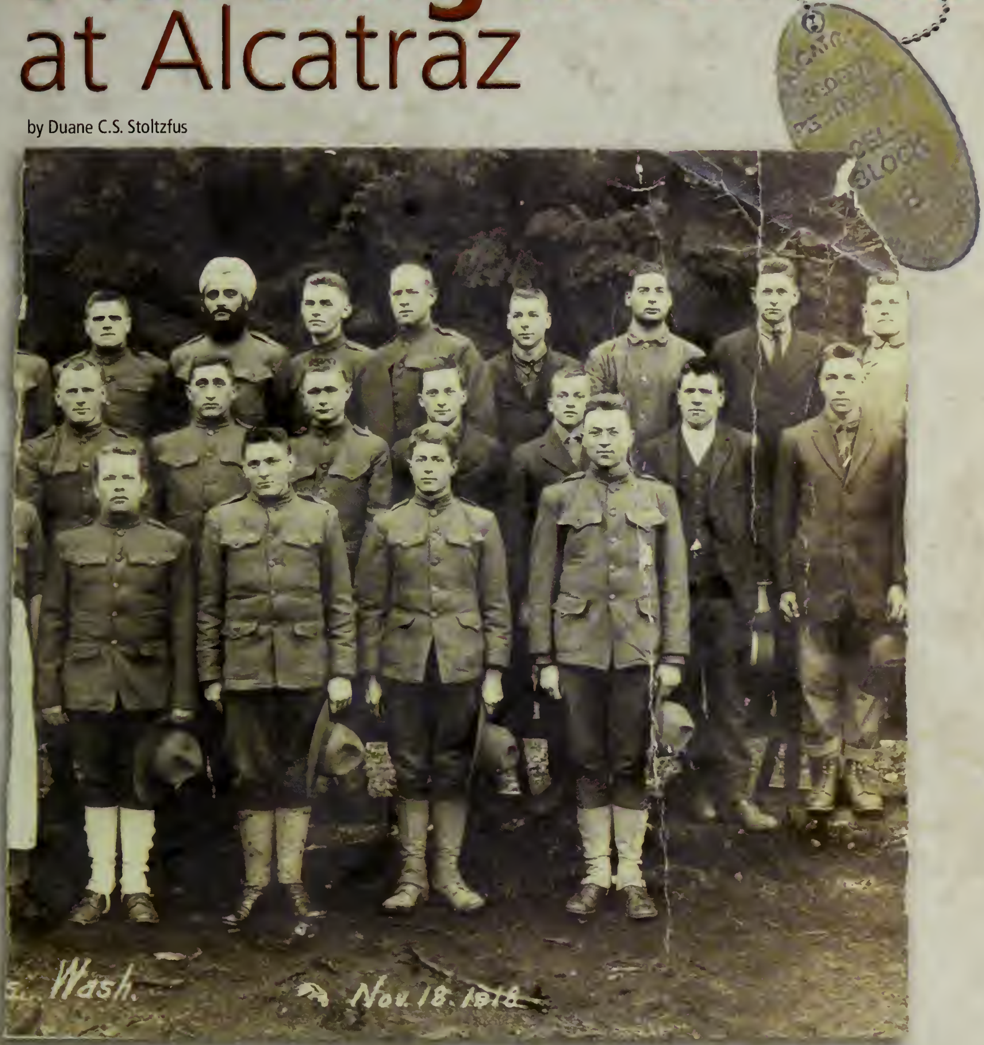
"I love providing that stability for people. We're here for them, and I love that I get to watch people grow, both in age and spiritually."

Sara Alvarez graduated from Goshen (Ind.) College in May and attends Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen. In August she will begin a one-year term serving with Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience.

When Hutterites were called to war

Standing in chains at Alcatraz

by Duane C.S. Stoltzfus



A photograph of conscientious objectors at Camp Lewis, Wash., Nov. 18, 1918. Four known Mennonite men are in the photo: (back row, third from right: Elmer McTimmmonds, lived near Sheridan, Ore.; back row, fourth from right: John Kropf, lived near Harrisburg, Ore.; middle row, fourth from right: Homer Schlegel, lived in Albany, Ore.; middle row, far right: Orie M. Conrad, later lived near Albany, Ore.). Orie refused to train and refused to put on a uniform. He paid dearly for it. At one point he almost lost his life by hanging but an officer saved him and his tormentors were courtmartialed. Orie M. Conrad Photographs, HM4-384. Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen. Goshen, Ind.

The wonder is that the U.S. Army even wanted four young Hutterite farmers from the Rockport Colony in South Dakota. Soldiering was most assuredly not in their DNA. The communal church to which they belonged had been resolutely set against all warfare for 400 years. Their grandparents had immigrated to the United States decades earlier, leaving their farms in Russia to travel thousands of miles, all to avoid having their men drafted into a newly expanded Russian military.

At the time of immigration, the United States was eager for settlers, especially skillful farmers. President Ulysses S. Grant personally wooed representatives for the Hutterites at his summer home on Long Island, N.Y. While the president said he couldn't promise they would be free of military service in the United States, he made the prospect of a draft sound highly unlikely—they could count on at least 50 untroubled years, he assured them.

Yet here these young farmers were on the morning of May 25, 1918, well short of the 50-year mark, summoned by the U.S. Army for service in World War I. Three of the men were brothers: David, Michael and Joseph Hofer. As might be expected in their closed community, the fourth man, Jacob Wipf, was a relative; he was Joseph's brother-in-law.

All four were leaving wives and young children at home on the colony, where the main work was farming and where all members held all property in common, wanting to follow in the footsteps of the early believers in Acts. The 4,000 acres of colony land belonged to the community of Hutterites. The 500 head of cattle belonged to the community. The identical fieldstone houses belonged to the community.

Less than 24 hours after their arrival, the Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf found themselves not on the parade ground but in Guardhouse No. 54.

On this day, the Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf were boarding a special military train for Camp Lewis, Washington, where tens of thousands of recruits from the Western states were already learning to salute, drill and handle a bayonet. The Hutterites were determined not to participate in the military, but they had been drafted and wanted to cooperate as long as they could, hoping for an assignment they could accept.

In the eyes of the military, every man who boarded the train was already a soldier in the U.S. Army—even if some, like the Hutterites, required more shaping than others. Things had been tense between the Hutterites and their neighbors since the United States entered the war a year before. The Hutterites had refused to buy war bonds.

And they kept to themselves and dressed oddly. The men wore black and grew beards, symbolic of their commitment to God. They also spoke German, the language of the enemy on the battlefield. On the very day the men left for Camp Lewis, South Dakota had banned the speaking of German in schools and churches, one of many efforts to ensure loyalty.

The tension between the Hutterites and their neighbors was apparent as soon as the four men boarded the train. A conductor took them from one Pullman coach to another, trying to find a place where they would be left in peace. To most of the 1,200 young men on the train, the Hutterites were "Russian cloonies," slackers of the worst kind.

All was quiet through the first night and into the next day. Then at midafternoon, a group of young

Camp Lewis, Washington, 1918

soldiers stormed their compartment. They hauled the Hutterites away, one by one, to cut off their beards and cut their hair. For the men with shears, it was a harmless and patriotic way to get the Hutterites to look the part of soldiers—"free barbering" they called it. For the Hutterites, it was a frightening introduction to the Army.

Rockport Colony to Camp Lewis (May 1918)

Stretching across about 70,000 acres, Camp Lewis was the largest of the Army's camps. It was, in many respects, an ideal place in which to train for battle. Few of the other training sites could compete with the vista at Camp Lewis. The barracks were arrayed in two curving arcs, which opened toward Mount Rainier, capped in white.

But less than 24 hours after their arrival, the Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf found themselves not on the parade ground but in Guardhouse No. 54. The officers had pressed the men to line up in formation and to fill out the enlistment and assignment cards, but the men were steadfast in their refusal. The card required each recruit to list his hometown, age and basic information—but on top of the card it said "Statement of Soldier." The Hutterites insisted that they were not soldiers and so could not complete the card. They said they could not line up with other men as soldiers. They could not head to the parade ground to drill.

In sending all drafted men to military camps (with no option for civilian service), President Woodrow Wilson and Newton Baker, the secretary of war, were confident they could persuade everyone, including members of the historic peace churches, such as the Hutterites, to do their part for the Army and the nation. Men who didn't want to carry a gun might, as soldiers, drive an ambulance or cook in the kitchen. The Army needed everyone. Wilson and Baker also envisioned the Army as a melting pot. At the time of the war, one third of Americans were born overseas or were the children of immigrants.

Each man's hands were crossed one over the other and chained to bars in the door. The chains were drawn up so that only their toes touched the floor, a technique known as 'high cuffing.'

But the Hutterites were committed to their own worldview, in which two kingdoms, one of God and one of the world, stood in conflict. They believed they could not contribute to the nation if it meant having to wear a uniform and serve in the Army. The Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf had the misfortune of arriving at Camp Lewis just as commanders across the country appeared intent on using trials to send a message to conscientious objectors like them and just before Secretary Baker opened the way for farm furloughs.

Before putting men on trial, though, the military had to declare they were insincere or defiant. The reasoning often seemed to be that anyone of sound mind who refused the military's fair offer of noncombatant service must be insincere. By that

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
5.12.18
ARMED FORCES

logic, the Hutterites stood no chance in securing a different outcome. They saw themselves as Christians, not soldiers, and as Christians their refusal to obey military orders was a sure sign of sincerity. The Hutterites and military officials were talking to one another across kingdom walls.

All four men were found guilty of all charges. They were sentenced to 20 years of hard labor, to be served at Alcatraz.

Camp Lewis to Alcatraz (July 1918)

At the end of July 1918, the Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf, chained together in pairs and escorted by four armed lieutenants, traveled down the coast by train to Alcatraz.

On arrival, each prisoner was instructed to take a bath and put on prison dress. When the men refused to put on the Army clothing, they were led down a flight of 14 stairs.

In this dungeon, each man entered a cell under a sloping brick arch, six feet high at the uppermost point; the cell itself measured 6½ feet wide by eight feet deep. Guards left a uniform on the floor for each man.

Alcatraz, which after the war would become a federal prison known for its high-profile inmates such as "Machine Gun" Kelly and Al Capone, was always a fearsome place, windswept and cut off by cold water currents. In the dungeon, all was pitch black and quiet. For the first 4½ days the Hutterites received half a glass of water each day but no food.

When the lid was opened, she found Joseph in death dressed in a military uniform that he had steadfastly refused to wear in life.

At night the men slept without blankets on the cement floor, which was wet from water that oozed through the walls—there were no beds in the dungeons. There were also no toilet facilities beyond a pail assigned to each man. On the floor beside them were soldiers' uniforms, promising some warmth if they relented.

The prison officials were determined to break the resistance of the Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf during their first week in the dungeon. During the last 36-hour period underground, each man's hands were crossed one over the other and chained to bars in the door. The chains were drawn up so that only their toes touched the floor, a technique known as "high cuffing."

By military law, the convicts could not be kept down in the dungeon longer than 14 days at a time. The Hutterites rotated into and out of the dungeon during the four months they spent at Alcatraz, first two weeks in the dungeon, then two weeks in a regular cell and so forth.

As members of a communal group, the Hutterites must have felt the isolation an extra burden, but the men are silent in their letters home, except to suggest that death is in the offing.

Alcatraz to Fort Leavenworth (November 1918)

San Francisco celebrated the armistice with a human chain of 5,000 people, who gathered at the Civic Center, still wearing flu masks as a precaution. Like so much of the rest of the country, the city was just emerging from the worst of an influenza epidemic when war, at least on paper, came to an end on Nov. 11, 1918.

Three days after the armistice the Hutterites left Alcatraz, still in chains. The men arrived at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., on Tuesday, Nov. 19, at 11 at night, fully spent. Chained together at the wrists, carrying their satchels in one hand and their Bibles and an extra pair of shoes under the arm, they were hurried on, up the hill toward the military prison.

The three Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf, who had been confined together since their arrival at Camp Lewis in May, finally separated at Fort Leavenworth. Joseph and Michael Hofer turned gravely ill. While David Hofer and Jacob Wipf were placed in solitary confinement, standing in chains nine hours a day, Michael and Joseph Hofer were hospitalized. Prison authorities alerted family members back in South Dakota.

Their wives arrived at Leavenworth in the evening in time to see their husbands. Joseph was barely able to communicate. He died at 8:35 the following morning, Nov. 29. The guards said that family members could not see him. But Maria, Joseph's wife, was forceful. The head officer relented. With tears in her eyes, she approached the coffin, which was set on two chairs. When the lid was opened, she found Joseph in death dressed in a military uniform that he had steadfastly refused to wear in life. Michael Hofer died a few days later.

To the Hutterites, the men were martyrs who died because of mistreatment at the hands of the state while remaining true to their religious beliefs. The Army listed the official cause of death as pneumonia, brought on by influenza.

The third brother, David Hofer, was immediately released, free to accompany the bodies of his brothers home to South Dakota. Jacob Wipf remained in solitary confinement.

Several days after Joseph and Michael Hofer died, Secretary Baker ordered that prisoners no longer be chained standing to the bars of cells.

Fort Leavenworth to Rockport Colony (April 1919)

On April 13, 1919, nearly 11 months after his arrest, Jacob Wipf reversed his walk through the iron gates of Leavenworth, free to return to South Dakota in time for spring planting.

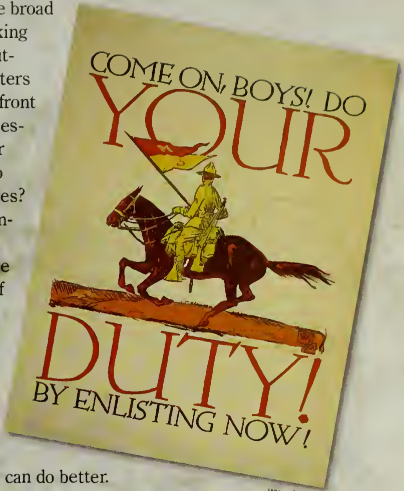
Back in South Dakota, he found a Hutterite homeland transformed. Many of the colonies had abandoned their farms and moved to Canada, and the Rockport colonists would soon do the same. When they reunited that spring, Jacob Wipf and David Hofer may have taken a short walk up the Rockport hillside to the cemetery to pay their respects to Joseph and Michael. All the grave markers in the cemetery were the size of a shoebox and identical, save two. One pictures the men bending low to read the grave markers for Joseph and Michael, where a single word had been added: martyr.

The experience of the four men contributes significantly to one of the darker chapters of this period of American history, when a wartime patriotic fever and a widespread suspicion of all things German fueled attacks on conscientious objectors and others who did not rally to the cause.

Their tale, distressing as it is, does not follow a simple script, neatly dividing the cast into heroes and villains. As the narrative unfolds, we can see why the Hutterites became absolutist objectors during the war and feel empathy for the men in the face of their sufferings. At the same time, we can appreciate the challenges set before military commanders and guards who followed a different set of orders and, by their worldview, could not understand why these men would not contribute to the national cause, if only by pushing a broom.

Even so, the government can be held to account these many years later. In Washington the highest officials in the land set in motion a series of actions, carried out by subordinates, that in isolation may have seemed measured and appropriate. The cumulative effect was a miscarriage of justice. Four men who sought neither to harm nor injure anyone at any turn ended up hanging in chains, a treatment President Wilson himself later described as "barbarous or mediaeval."

The Hutterites were part of a stream of Americans in World War I who were punished for remaining true to their convictions. They could have fallen in line on the broad path. By insisting on taking the narrow path, the Hutterites and other dissenters forced the nation to confront the most essential of questions: Is this the meager freedom that we wish to share in the United States? That someone will be imprisoned for refusing to fight or for criticizing the war or for speaking ill of the nation's leaders? And over time, the answer came back from lawmakers in Congress, from justices on the Supreme Court, and, most importantly, from neighbors, that we can do better.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Our constitutional compass, including the First Amendment, promising freedom of speech and freedom to practice religion, and the Eighth amendment, banning cruel and unusual punishment, now points us toward a higher ground. The Hofer brothers and Jacob Wipf received one-sentence obits when they died, but they left expansive legacies. Their story of holding fast to religious beliefs in the face of persecution challenges Christians in their walk and reminds all Americans, nearly a century later, that we're only as free as the Hutterites among us.

Duane C.S. Stoltzfus, a professor of communication at Goshen (Ind.) College and the copy editor for Mennonite Quarterly Review, *presented the C. Henry Smith Peace Lecture at Bluffton (Ohio) University on Feb. 28 and at Goshen College on March 12. This article is excerpted from the lecture.*

IMMIGRATION SPECIAL SECTION

Immigration denial has a bittersweet effect on a Virginia church plant.

Back to South Africa

by Wil LaVeist

Pastors Karen and Flinn Ranchod
Photo provided

The words spoken by the voice on the other end of the phone stunned Bishop L.W. Francisco III. When his wife and ministry partner, Pastor Natalie Francisco, heard the news, it certainly wasn't the answer to prayer they had anticipated. ▶

It was 2010, and the leaders of Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va. (also known as "C3"), were convinced that God would not let nearly 10 years of nurturing their church plant in nearby Chesapeake, Va., be in vain. But the news was true that Pastor Flinn Ranchod and his wife, co-pastor Karen Ranchod, and their four daughters would have to return to South Africa.

"It was shocking, at first, when we found out the attorney had missed the filing date," says Bishop Francisco regarding the extension of the Ranchod's R-1 temporary religious worker visa. "My biggest concern was not how it affected us but for his family and how I would feel if I was in his situation."

The Ranchods had put down roots. Their daughters, Kayroonisa, 21, Priyanka, 19, Caitlyn, 16, and 13-year-old Hannah, were basically Americanized.

"We were advised that the only way it could be resolved is if the laws were changed," Pastor Natalie says. "But we trusted that God was still in control and would bring forth a victory."

Bishop L.W. Francisco III and Pastor Natalie Francisco of Calvary Community Church

Photo provided

The Franciscos helped the Ranchods scramble to attempt to get the U.S. Citizens and Immigration Department decision reversed. They contacted U.S. Congress members. The Ranchods even wrote President Obama but to no avail. In this post-9/11 world of heightened homeland security, the rules are the rules, and the law is the law. No grace for missing the visa extension deadline. The Ranchods would have to begin the immigration process in South Africa all over again, which could take years. After much contemplation, they decided that the Ranchods and the Chesapeake congregants would attend services at C3 in Hampton while preparations were made to move the Ranchods back to their native homeland. They rented the church in Chesapeake to another ministry, and on July 3, 2011, the Ranchods boarded a plane for South Africa.

The Ranchods would have to begin the immigration process in South Africa all over again, which could take years.

The Franciscos and Ranchods had become like family. The Franciscos' daughters, Nicole, 28, Lesley, 23, and Lauren, 21, were like sisters to the Ranchod girls. The ministers had walked together since the vision of the church plant began taking shape in 2000 during a visit to the United States by Pastor Flinn. He came to cement the relationship between C3 and Breakthru Church International, a church-planting partnership with Mennonite Mission Network founded in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Pastor Flinn was then an associate pastor at New Zion Ministries International, Breakthru's umbrella organization.

During the initial visit, Bishop Francisco shared his vision of a church plant in the United States being pastored by a South African under what officially became Calvary Covenant Ministries in 2006. CCM is an association of affinity churches under Bishop Francisco. There are also churches in Rocky Mount, N.C., and in Houston and San Antonio, Texas. C3 is part of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.

The location of the former Deep Creek Mennonite Church in Chesapeake became available. The Ranchods agreed that God was calling them to the United States, so they obtained the visas, sold their business and in 2001 packed the family and moved to Virginia. After a six-month pastoral apprenticeship under the Franciscos, the Ranchods started Calvary Community Church, Chesapeake. Its membership steadily grew to just shy of 100 people.

"The Lord was gracious by sending to us different people with different needs," Pastor Flinn says. "Through the grace and strength of God I was able to shepherd them."

It seems Jesus had a plan for C3 in Virginia to plant a church in South Africa.

Pastor Flinn says he retained a lawyer and in 2003 began the steps toward permanent residency. In January 2005, the lawyer filed the residency application, but it was later denied because the lawyer had mistakenly missed a previous filing extension for their visas, Pastor Flinn says.

The Department of Homeland Security estimates there are 11.5 million unauthorized immigrants (individuals who are foreign born and living illegally) in the United States as of January 2011. Fifty-nine percent cross through the Mexican border. South Africa is not among the top 10 countries of origin, which include China, India and Brazil. An estimated one-third of illegal immigrants in the United States have expired visas for tourism, education or work.

"I believe the government should fix the immigration system because there are a lot of honest people that come to America not only seeking greener pastures but to make America a better place," Pastor Flinn says.

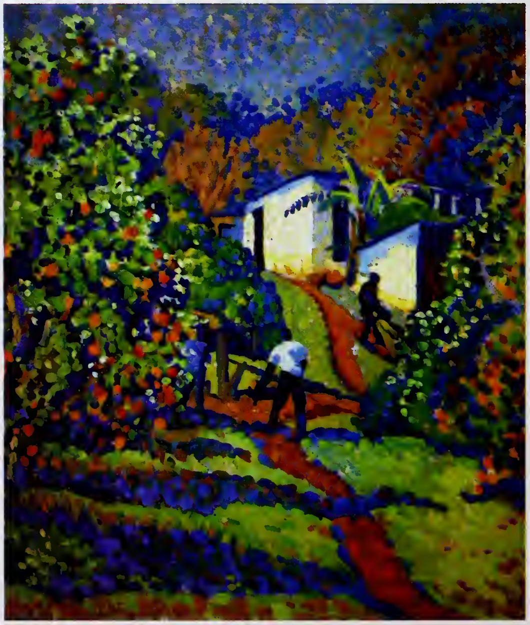
However, the family's return to Pietermaritzburg has not been all bitter. The Ranchods have reconnected with family members they missed dearly and have begun a new church, C3 South Africa, in their home. They hold worship services in their garage. Pastor Natalie visited in March and was heartwarmed to witness the overflow of more than 100 worshipers filling the Ranchods' driveway. Some people had to be turned away for lack of space.

"It has been bittersweet, but I believe the church in Pietermaritzburg is taking off so quickly because they brought the principals of sound teaching that they learned from C3 and also a new leadership style," Pastor Natalie says.

"As a church family and husband and wife, we tried to walk with them and be a source of encouragement and let them know we would continue to partner with them in terms of what God is doing in South Africa," Bishop Francisco says.

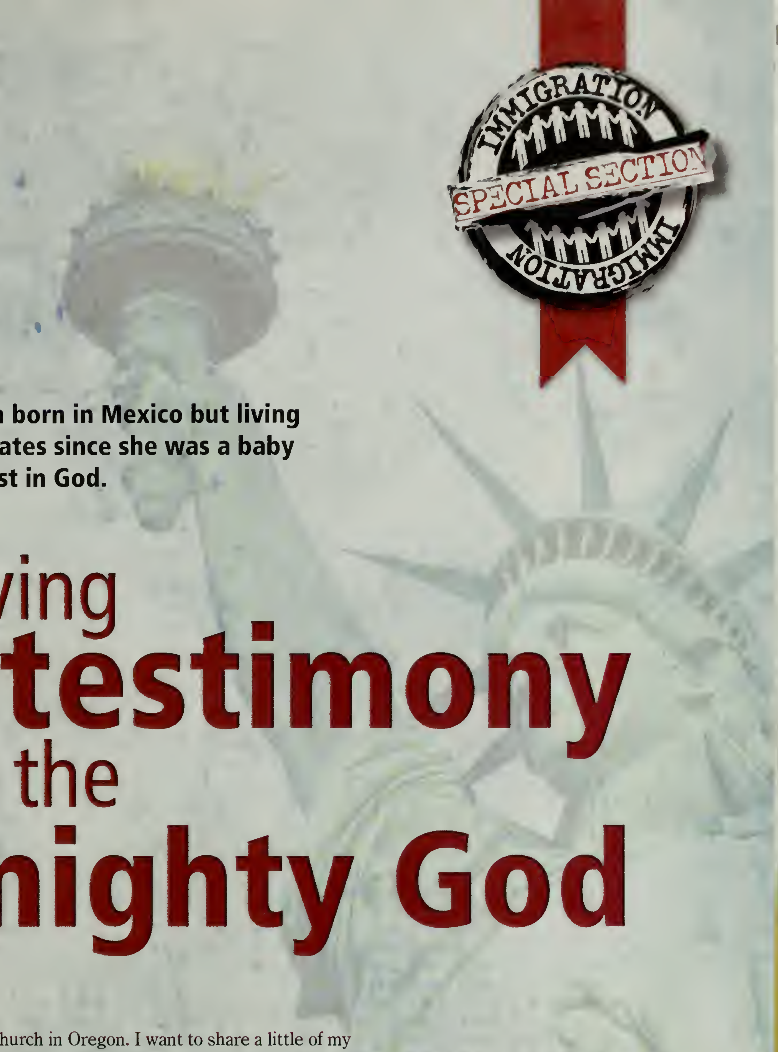
Indeed, it seems Jesus had a plan for C3 in Virginia to plant a church in South Africa.

"Bishop and Pastor Natalie made a tremendous impact in our lives, nurturing us spiritually as well as having supported us financially (Karen Ranchod also worked at C3's school, Calvary Christian Academy) for the 10 years that we were in the [United States]," Pastor Flinn says. "We are forever grateful for all they have done for us and our children. ... Although we are living about 10,000 miles away from them, they still mentor us, and we thank God for them."



www.commons.wikimedia.org | "Orchard at Glenaholm" by Rosa Hope, Pietermaritzburg, 1945

Wil LaVeist is a member of Calvary Community Church and multimedia managing editor of Mennonite Mission Network.



IMMIGRATION SPECIAL SECTION

A young woman born in Mexico but living in the United States since she was a baby is driving to trust in God.

A living testimony of the Almighty God

by Anonymous

I am a member of a church in Oregon. I want to share a little of my testimony with you today because, as King Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 4:2, "I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me."

I was born in San Juan del Rio, Queretaro, in Mexico. My parents brought my oldest sister and me to the United States when I was just a baby; about 8 months old. My mother's decision to return for her two babies, at a time when she was just a kid herself, about 18 years old, is one I admire to this day. She tells us she came first with Dad, worked for three months and couldn't bear living without us one more day. I have to admit I have no memory of my first experience crossing the border. My funny sister, on the other hand, although only about 3 at the time, tells me time and time again how she clearly remembers the foul breath on the man carrying her across the river. ▶

Up to the age of 14, it never crossed my mind that I was any different from my classmates, other than the fact that I couldn't go to Mexico.

I first heard of my being undocumented through an argument my parents had when I was 8 years old. An uncle in Mexico had died, and my mother wanted me to go with her to the funeral. My father argued, "But you know she doesn't have papers. How will we bring her back?" After this incident, I knew I didn't have "papers," but I didn't comprehend exactly what this entailed or how detrimental this would be for me in the future.

I went to school in Santa Ana, Calif., up to the eighth grade. Middle school gave me such confidence in myself because I got the sense I could do anything. It was during those years that I played violin and cello in the advanced orchestra, was MVP of the school's soccer team and was heading to high school with medals, honors and my first scholarship for being a straight-A student. I recall buying my first pair of Jordans with the scholarship. Up to the age of 14, it never crossed my mind that I was any different from my classmates, other than the fact that I couldn't go to Mexico, and that wasn't something that was in my dreams. My dream was to become my hometown high school's valedictorian and later a successful pediatrician.

I came to realize the only thing I was sure I had was my faith in a living God.

I was 14 when my parents decided that for the well-being of their soon-to-be teenagers, it would be best to move to Oregon. They were always worried we would become involved in the gangs that were rapidly growing in our hometown.

It took a while to recover from the shock of becoming the minority in high school. There are many more Hispanics in California than in Oregon, which I believe makes it friendlier. I did not witness racism growing up until we moved to Oregon.

As I continued to pursue my dreams, I was struck with the news that I needed health insurance to be involved in the school's sports. It turned out I didn't have any because I didn't have a social security number; I wasn't born here. Later, when speaking with my counselor about college, I learned I wouldn't be eligible for any student loans or potential scholarships without a valid SSN. I came to realize the only thing I was sure I had was my faith in a living God. I convinced myself to believe that was all I needed.

I've also come to understand that my plans weren't exactly aligned with God's plans for my life. I didn't end up being valedictorian. And while I did start out at a community college, I had to pause, as I like to call it, because it was too expensive without any help.

It was in God's perfect plans, though, that I married a servant of God in whom the fear of the Lord was instilled from a young age. It wasn't until the arrival of our son that I started asking God to allow us to fix our legal status, for the sake of our baby.

Our latest battle was against the management of the apartments we lived in from May 2007 to April 2011. They demanded we provide two valid SSNs in order to renew our lease. As we asked for the Lord's guidance, God comforted us and gave us the strength to conquer this with courage. We provided our valid ITINs (Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers) and firmly told them the information we had given them was all they needed to make their decision. (It is legal to use an ITIN because it is issued by the Internal Revenue Service primarily to be able to declare taxes. It also serves as valid information to open a bank account, apply for loans, begin and build a credit history.)

Regardless of our spotless four-year rental history with them, they said, "Then we're sorry to tell you we won't accept your application." This is when fear tried to make us stumble. We had 30 days to find a place to live, but now with the fear of being denied simply because of this. For a minute, I thought the devil had defeated us. I thought God's miracle would have to be to supernaturally force them to accept us regardless of our status. Little did I know about the far-greater miracle God had in store for us. I forgot he has promised to fulfill the desires of my heart, according to his will.

God allowed us to rent a house with no hesitation from the manager. Moreover, God reassures us that he is our Lord Most High. He protects us and will complete the good works he started in us.

We have honored the writer's wish to remain anonymous. This is based on a testimony she gave at a Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference annual meeting.

Immigrants from Indonesia receive different treatment, depending on their circumstances.

A selective welcome

by Anna Groff

Pastor Sunoko Lin Photo provided

Sunoko Lin, the bivocational pastor at Maranatha Christian Fellowship in Northridge, Calif., sees multiple sides of the immigration issue. ▶

Aldo Siahaan
© Tim Moyer Photography

Lin came from Indonesia to the United States in 1985 to attend the University of Washington and study accounting.

He says that being a Christian Chinese Indonesian means experiencing double discrimination, Chinese ethnicity and Christian faith. Normally, Christian Chinese Indonesians are given limited access to government employment positions or admittance into a public university.

"Many in my generation left Indonesia because we were mistreated because of our status," he says. "If I had stayed, my only option would have been to attend the lesser quality, private colleges and pay a lot of money." Going to the University of Washington was similar in price and a much better experience.

> Adding to their grief was that one of their three sons had to return to Indonesia only five months away from high school graduation.

Currently, discrimination against Chinese Christians in Indonesia has decreased; however, people still want to emigrate to the United States for economic reasons and improved living conditions.

"For those who come here legally for school and get a job, the United States treats us very well," he says. For Lin, his status as an international student and then finding a job as an accountant made the process relatively easy, and he became a U.S. citizen in only five years.

He became the pastor in 2004 and still works as an accountant.

However, as a pastor he sees the other side for those who lack resources—for example, affording higher education outside Indonesia.

It remains competitive to receive a visa, so many Indonesians apply for asylum—which offers no guarantees. Applying for asylum is costly, too. One case costs $1,500 for the documentation, with the added costs of court hearings and lawyer fees.

"If your petition for asylum is denied, you can request an appeal. However, the process may take years, with no guarantee of approval," he says.

Aldo Siahaan, pastor of Philadelphia Praise Center, says that finding a lawyer and in many cases a translation also costs a lot of money. Some of the immigrants at his church work in factories, and much of their income goes toward paying these fees.

These immigrants also need a lot of support from Siahaan and other church members in terms of translation and understanding when and where their immigration hearings are scheduled.

The undocumented individuals live in fear, and some disguise themselves when they are outside their home, Siahaan says.

At his multicultural congregation, 60 percent of the Indonesian immigrants are documented, and 40 percent are undocumented. Of the Hispanic immigrants at the church, about 80 percent are undocumented, he says.

"Most immigrants work hard and aren't involved in crime," Siahaan says. "They want to send money to their families back home."

While Lin believes the issue's costs and complexities is too much for one organization to take on, he suggests partnerships between Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Church USA, area conferences and others, especially in the areas of education about immigration issues and support for immigrants.

"Maybe together we can come with better strategies," he says.

Lin is on the West Coast Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Mission Network boards. He received master's degree in crosscultural studies from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

Sunoko Lin told three stories of Indonesian immigrants of his acquaintance (see boxes, page 27).

Anna Groff is associate editor of The Mennonite.

Undocumented individuals live in fear, and some disguise themselves when they are outside their home.

Removal withheld

Six years ago, a member of our church found out his petition for asylum was denied. Five years ago, he had a surprise visit from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). He was sent to jail and faced deportation.

The church got in touch with an immigration lawyer to see whether or not a request for a "withholding of removal" could be granted. While there was no guarantee, after three months, an immigration judge who reviewed his case decided to grant him the removal. That means he can stay legally in the country without having to fear deportation.

However, this does not mean he has U.S. residency. If the United States finds another country suitable for him to live in, he has to comply and leave. Recently, he received a letter from a deportation officer that required him to report. He feared he would be asked to leave the country. However, it turned out that ICE has misplaced his "withholding of removal" paperwork and wants to receive updates from him.

The loss of a dream

Two years ago, we lost an entire family due to deportation. This family had applied for asylum, but their application was denied. After the final appeal with the Ninth Circuit was denied, they decided to stay, hoping they would receive U.S. residency when their youngest U.S.-born son could sponsor them at age 21. However, that dream did not materialize.

One night in 2010, they had a visit from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and were sent to jail for two months before they were deported to Indonesia. It was heartbreaking for the family. They had worked hard to achieve a better life in the United States. After many years of hard work since their arrival in this country, both husband and wife became area managers for a national-chain fast-food restaurant. Now their achievement and dream for a better life were lost.

Adding to their grief was that one of their three sons had to return to Indonesia only five months away from high school graduation. The church is still in contact with the family and learned that the family is still trying to cope with the loss of their dream of a better life in the United States.

A fortunate marriage

One member of our church worked with a major cruise liner before he joined the church in 2005. His journey of living in the United States began that year, when he decided not to return to Indonesia after his contract as a seaman expired.

For the renewal of his contract, he had to return to Indonesia. However, while the ship was docking in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., he decided to leave and come to southern California.

A few months after his arrival, he got married. His decision to abandon the ship and stay in the United States violates the international law that a seaman will not be accepted as a legal immigrant.

Several months ago, he received a letter from the deportation officer for an interview, and he was worried. About two weeks later, after arguing whether he should report to the officer, he decided to attend the interview. To his surprise, he was granted permanent residency because of his history of no criminal record and his marriage to a U.S. resident with two children born in the United States.

Edible plants bring beauty, food and less lawn to mow.

Edible landscaping

by Sheryl Shenk

Dee Birkey

Photo provided

AMBS

inside this issue

2 2012 graduates

6 Where does this day fit in God's larger story

Three new faculty members

7 Two professors retire

Your gifts at work

8 Panorama

Summer 2012
Volume 22 Issue 3

AMBS
window

Organizing goodness

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

Vincent Harding, longtime friend and co-worker of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said at a recent event at AMBS, "Martin used to love to say this: 'We've got to organize goodness.'" And Harding asked: "What would it mean to organize goodness? Is that what seminaries are for?"

My mind has not stopped spinning around this intriguing question ever since. I recognized immediately that it named what I believe to be AMBS's mission as a learning community.

A few years ago, Jewish ethicist and educator Hanan Alexander published a book: *Reclaiming Goodness—Education and the Spiritual Quest*. He asserts that "people are searching for spirituality today … because comprehensive visions of the good are conspicuously absent from modern culture."

Alexander states that "education is not first and foremost about acquiring knowledge, or gaining identity, or insuring group continuity … but rather about empowering a person to choose a vision of the good life."

Philosophers from Socrates and Aristotle onward have debated what it means to be good and what the good life entails.

Our Scriptures tell us that God organized goodness out of chaos. The earth was a formless void, and dark. God organized celestial lights to rule the day and night, waters and dry land to appear under a dome of sky, plants and trees to bear seeds and fruits, living creatures to fill the earth, man and woman to be created in God's image. God also blessed and hallowed rest. God looked at all that was created and proclaimed it very good.

The goodness of God. Being good. The good life. There is no end of ways to ponder what goodness looks like and how we are called to "organize goodness"—as schools; as non-profits, health institutions, businesses—and above all, as leaders of faith communities. I'm reminded of Paul's encouragement to the church: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good …. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

As an Anabaptist seminary we educate leaders to "organize goodness" within communities of shalom—empowered to minister in the way of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

With the program redesign underway at AMBS, we are embracing a "comprehensive vision of the good" inspired by Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and the fervor of the Anabaptists to live out that goodness in their communities. It is their witness to the good news of Christ's peace as central to God's grand and good mission for the world that fires our imagination. ●

NEW! Becoming Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary on August 28

AMBS Window is a publication of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary ~ www.ambs.edu

Twenty-eight graduates honored at commencement

Twenty-eight graduates were honored at the AMBS commencement service on May 26, 2012. They received the following degrees and certificates:

MDiv	Master of Divinity
MAPS	Master of Arts: Peace Studies
MATS	Master of Arts: Theological Studies
MACF	Master of Arts in Christian Formation
CERT	Certificate in Theological Studies

Bryan Belting *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies*. Bryan and Dawn, his wife, have two children. They are members of Epic Church in Mishawaka, Ind.

Kay Bontrager-Singer *MDiv.* Will continue as pastor of Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. She and Jamey, her husband, have three children.

Jeff Boyd *MAPS with a concentration in International Development*. Jeff is married to Charissa and is a member of Farmington Seventh Day Adventist Church, Farmington Hills, Mich.

Heather Bunce *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies*. Will continue as adjunct teacher at Great Lakes Christian College, Lansing, Mich. She and Ryan, her husband, have two children. They are members of Delta Community Christian Church, Lansing.

Wilma Cender *Cert.* Will continue study at AMBS in the Master of Arts in Christian Formation program. Wilma is a member of Valparaiso Mennonite Church, Valparaiso, Ind. She and Karl Cender are parents of two children.

Dreama Coleman *MDiv.* Will continue on the pastoral team of Canaan Baptist Church, Elkhart, Ind., and pursue a vocation that incorporates both her Master of Arts in Education-Curriculum and Instruction and Master of Divinity degrees. She and her mother, Cecelia Goodrich, also a 2012 graduate, are waiting on God's leading to restart their church, Only God Outreach Ministries. Coleman has three children and three grandchildren.

Jane Friesen *MDiv.* Served on pastoral team of Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, until her death on April 22. Jane was married to Kel Friesen, who survives, along with two young adult daughters.

Teresa Geiser *MDiv.* Will do a chaplaincy residency program at St. Joseph Medical Center, Mishawaka, during the next year. She is married to Charlie Geiser and they have two adult children. She is a member of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church.

Jennifer Gingerich *MDiv in pastoral care and counseling*. Will serve as interim pastor on the pastoral team of Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, then pursue hospital chaplaincy. Jennifer is a member of Salem (Ore.) Mennonite Church and Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, Ore.

Cecelia Goodrich *MACF with a concentration in teaching ministry*. Serves in the Ministers Training program at Canaan Baptist Church, Elkhart, teaching the Bible study for senior life ministry, and plans to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree. She is married to DeVon L. Goodrich, Sr., and they have four adult children.

Bryan Belting, Kay Bontrager-Singer, Jeff Boyd, Heather Bunce, Dreama Coleman, Teresa Geiser Not pictured: **Wilma Cender, Jane Friesen**

Jocelyn Graber *MDiv.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment and exploring options for a chaplain residency program. Jocelyn is a member of Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, Kan.

Anna Ruth Hershberger *MDiv.* Considering ministry assignments. Anna Ruth is a member of East Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Keith Hiebner *MATS with a concentration in theology and ethics.* Keith is married to Anne Hiebner and is a member of Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Neb.

Janna Hunter-Bowman *MAPS.* Continues Ph.D. study at the University of Notre Dame through the Kroc Institute for International Peace. She and Jess Hunter-Bowman have two daughters. They participate in Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind., and she is a member of Bally Mennonite Church, Bally, Pa.

Sara Klassen

Jane Friesen, member of the pastoral team of Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, received a diploma in a special commencement service in her home on April 3. Jane died on April 22, and her daughters, Kimberly and Kate, received her official diploma in the commencement service on May 26.

"AMBS granted the degree in recognition of a mission accomplished, a ministry fulfilled," Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, reflected. "It was a recognition of her persistence and courage, but most of all an acknowledgement of the integrity of her calling to ministry."

David Miller, associate professor of missional leadership development at AMBS, noted that through her reflections in her blog over the time of her illness, "Jane has given a legacy gift to family and friends, the church and future seminary students in the way that she has engaged the struggle with cancer and its attendant questions with deep faith, humanity and theological insight."

Jennifer Gingerich, Cecelia Goodrich, Jocelyn Graber, Anna Ruth Hershberger, Janna Hunter-Bowman Not pictured: Keith Hiebner

2012 Graduates

Rebecca Kauffman *MDiv*. Will begin as copastor of Paoli (Ind.) Mennonite Fellowship this summer. Rebecca is married to Andrew Blount, and she is a member of Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Joshua Kinder *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies*. Josh has received a fellowship from the Knowles Science Teaching Foundation to pursue a career in teaching high school mathematics and he will begin Goshen College's Transition to Teaching program. He is a member of Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Christopher Kruchkow *MDiv*. Will continue serving Cross Community Church, Berne, Ind. Chris and Laura Lee Kruchkow have three children.

Sandra Miller *MDiv*. Will continue as Director for Church Relations with Mennonite Mission Network. She and Michael Miller have three daughters. She is a member of Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Karla Minter *MACF*. Seeking ways to engage congregations and individuals in the biblical story, Christian faith formation and spiritual guidance. Karla and William Minter have two children. She is a member of Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Adam Nussbaum *MDiv*. Will be pastor of Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire, Mich. Adam is a member of College Mennonite Church and attends Eighth Street Mennonite Church, both in Goshen.

Andrea Opel *MDiv*. Will continue study at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich., to complete the Master of Social Work. She is a member of Glade Mennonite Church, Accident, Md.

Delora Reinhardt *MDiv with a concentration in pastoral care and counseling*. Currently doing pastoral counseling. She and Randy Reinhardt have three children. She is a member of Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Jamie Ross *MDiv with concentration in biblical studies and an emphasis on mission*. Approved for an international placement with Mennonite Mission Network and plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Islamic studies. She is a member of Southside Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Hilary Scarsella *MDiv with a concentration in theology and ethics and an emphasis in peace studies*. Hilary is a member of Kern Road Mennonite Church. She is engaged to Sam Jerome.

Marcus Schlegel *MDiv with a concentration in theological studies*. Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. He is a member of First Mennonite Church of San Francisco, Calif.

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg *MDiv with a concentration in theological studies*. Exploring further education as well as other ministry possibilities. She and Shem, her husband, have two children. They are members of Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Mark Seymour *MDiv in pastoral care and counseling*. Mark is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Elkhart.

John Werner *MDiv*. Seeking a pastoral ministry assignment in the United Church of Christ. He has been pastor of First Salem United Church of Christ in Wichita, Kan., for five years. ●

Rebecca Kauffman, Josh Kinder, Chris Kruchkow, Sandy Miller, Karla Minter, Adam Nussbaum

Faculty gives awards to graduates

AMBS faculty select graduates to receive special awards and present these at the Dean's Breakfast the day before commencement. Awards include subscriptions to journals, gift certificates at the Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore and registration at a future Pastors Week.

This year's award recipients are:

Karla Minter: Certificate for excellence in Christian spiritual formation

Kay Bontrager-Singer: Certificate for excellence in pastoral ministry

Marcus Schlegel: Certificate for excellence in missional leadership

Jennifer Gingerich: Certificate for excellence in pastoral care and counseling

Joshua Kinder: Millard Lind award for excellence in biblical interpretation

Adam Nussbaum: Willard M. Swartley award for excellence in biblical interpretation

Heather Bunce: Perry B. Yoder award for excellence in Hebrew exegesis

Mary E. Klassen

Jamie Ross receives a certificate for excellence from AMBS Professor Gayle Gerber Koontz.

Janna Hunter-Bowman: John Yoder award for excellence in theological peace studies

Jamie Ross: Marlin Miller award for excellence in theological studies in the Master of Divinity program (mission and evangelism concentration)

Hilary Scarsella: Marlin Miller award for excellence in theological studies in the Master of Divinity program (theological studies-peace studies concentration) ●

Andrea Opel, Delora Reinhardt, Jamie Ross, Hilary Scarsella, Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg Not pictured: **Marc Schlegel, Mark Seymour, John Werner**

Where does this day fit in God's larger story?

Where does this day fit into the story of the river of life flowing through the city and the leaves of the tree bringing healing for the nations?

That question from commencement speaker Shanta Premawardhana brought the text from the end of Revelation to the context of graduation.

Throughout his address, the president of the Seminary Consortium of Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago explored the ways graduates might contribute to this vision of bringing healing to the world today. "Dreaming the impossible dream is not enough. We need to be willing to strap that faith to our feet," he said, "or it stays a utopian vision with no reality on the ground."

Recounting a challenge he received early in his ministry as a pastor in Chicago, Premawardhana noted that a pastor is not just a pastor to a congregation, but to the community. When people are evicted from apartments because of the greed of financers, children are getting substandard education, mothers must buy food at liquor stores because they live in an urban food desert, young African-Americans are incarcerated in record numbers and teens are killed because our society is awash in guns—"all of those fall under my job description as pastor," he emphasized.

However, pastors have the responsibility to equip members of congregations for the work of building God's beloved community. Members of churches today may want to be safe, Premawardhana said, but "the effective church is an engaged church; it is a prophetic church; it is a dangerous church."

In conclusion he asked the graduates, "Today, you are graduating. Where does that fit in the story that ends with the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations?"

Dr. Premawardhana served as an urban pastor for fourteen years in Chicago and is a community organizer, theologian and scholar. Originally from Sri Lanka, he has worked at the National Council of Churches in New York as associate general secretary for Interfaith Relations, and director of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland.

AMBS has been a member of SCUPE since its beginning in 1976, and regularly has students who commute to Chicago to participate in classes and conferences that equip seminarians with information and experience for leadership in urban settings. ●

Nekeisha Alexis-Baker

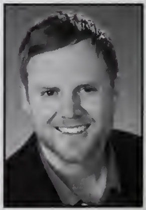
The commencement banner and visuals were created and organized by Teresa Geiser and Andrea Opel. They illustrated the Isaiah 41 and Revelation 22 texts that served as the theme for commencement.

Three new faculty members appointed

Three new professors will join the AMBS faculty this summer.

Andy Brubacher Kaethler (left) will serve as assistant professor of faith formation and culture, a half-time position. He has been director of !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth since 2003 and has been a sessional instructor at AMBS. He is a Ph.D. candidate at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill. Before coming to AMBS he was conference youth minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and associate pastor of Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont.

Rachel Miller Jacobs will serve as assistant professor of congregational formation, a half-time position. She is a Doctor of Ministry student at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Ill. She also serves as a spiritual director and worship resources coordinator for *Leader.* For six years she was pastor of Christian formation for Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind., and has led retreats and workshops for various church groups.



Jamie Pitts, Ph.D., will become assistant professor of Anabaptist studies. Jamie serves as social media coordinator for the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. In 2011 he completed a Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh, focusing on the sociological theology of John Howard Yoder. Previously, he was coordinator of Interethnic Dialogues on Immigration for Church World Service in Washington, D.C.; online adult education instructor for the Clarendon Presbyterian Church; and English language instructor at the Pasadena Community Job Center, Pasadena, Calif. ●

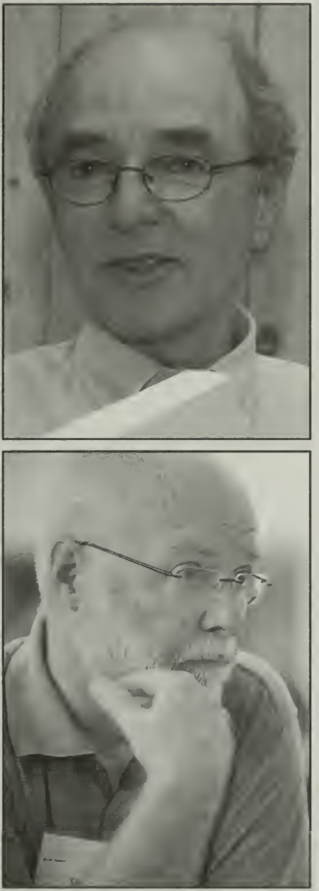
John Rempel and Walter Sawatsky retire from AMBS

John Rempel, professor of theology and Anabaptist studies, will become director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Center at the Toronto School of Theology when he retires this summer. He has taught at AMBS since 2003 and served as associate director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies.

John is a seasoned and wise pastor, recognized scholar, and observer and participant in world affairs, Rebecca Slough, academic dean, said.

A particular interest of John's has been engaging in ecumenical conversations at the international level. This has included organizing a gathering of ecumenical peace and justice scholars and workers in 2010 at AMBS and serving on the Mennonite Church USA Interchurch Relations Committee.

For eight years John served on the committee that coordinated *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, and he edited the Mennonite *Minister's Manual*. At AMBS he was part of the team that created the Anabaptist prayer book. All of these were "remarkably formative for Mennonite spirituality," Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor of theology and ethics, pointed out. She noted his weightiest (literally) scholarly work was the painstaking editing of an English translation of *Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch*, a 16th-century collection of Anabaptist writings.


Mary E. Klassen

Peter Ringenberg

John Rempel (top) and Walter Sawatsky.

Walter Sawatsky will retire from teaching this summer, after serving as professor of church history and mission. He came to AMBS as a visiting professor in 1985 and was named to the faculty in 1990.

In addition to teaching, Walter also was East-West Consultant for Mennonite Central Committee for many years, continuing to build the relationships that he had developed in his previous 12 years in Europe with MCC. He continues to travel to eastern Europe and Russia to teach.

He is a member of the Global Mennonite History Project Organizing Committee and was instrumental in coordinating the celebration of the project last October. He edits two journals: *Mission Focus: Annual Review* and *Religion in Eastern Europe*, coordinated translation of a 31-volume commentary series into Russian, and has edited and written extensively on issues related to the church in Eastern Europe.

In honoring him recently, AMBS Dean Rebecca Slough said, "Walter has most often responded to needs of the church in scholarship and documented our story. He has been less driven by his own personal scholarly agenda. In that way he has been and continues to be servant of the church and its people, recording its stories—for the present and for the future."

Walter will now concentrate on research and writing projects that he has been hoping to do.

For photos of celebrations honoring John and Walter, visit AMBS's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/followAMBS, and select the link for photos.

Your gifts at work

A student's first encounter with AMBS often comes through the admissions team as they travel to colleges and conferences and respond to inquiries.

The work of this team, Rhonda Yoder, Jody Walker, and Brenna Harker, opens the door to the study, worship, spiritual growth and mentoring at AMBS. Under the direction of Bob Rosa, director of enrollment and student services, this team welcomes students to AMBS each semester. They and the campus pastor, Janeen Bertsche Johnson, keep attuned to how students are experiencing their studies and life at AMBS.

Your gifts support this essential, day-to-day ministry. Your prayers sustain these staff members as they care for applicants and students. Thank you. ●

AMBS

Summer 2012
Volume 22 Issue 3

The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

Editor: Mary E. Klassen
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker, Karma Hooley

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
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panorama

Pastors Week 2013

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon us: The immeasurable dimensions of Jubilee" is the theme, with Dr. Kim Tan, venture capitalist, Bible teacher and social entrepreneur from Surrey, United Kingdom. Visit **www.ambs.edu/pastors week.**

Missional church focus for weekend course

What does it mean for a church to be missional? What skills are needed to nurture a missional ethos? A fall weekend course explores these issues, led by David Miller, associate professor of missional leadership development. The course meets one weekend in each month of the fall semester. For details and to register, visit **www.ambs.edu** and search for "Fall."

Online classes next spring

When you take your first online class, you pay only half the regular tuition cost (if you are not already enrolled in a master's level theological program). Next spring, online offerings are

- Anabaptist history and theology
- Anabaptist approaches to Scripture

More details are available by searching for "courses" at **www.ambs.edu.**

Workshops, webinars, short courses

Worship planning workshops, stories from radical Christian renewal, group spiritual direction and planting peace churches are among the offerings from the Church Leadership Center for the next school year. Webinars, workshops and online short courses are available. For information, visit **www.ambs.edu** and search for "Church Leadership Center."

Faculty scholarship

A list of faculty books, articles, reviews and lectureships is posted on **www.ambs.edu.** Search for "faculty scholarship" to browse this compilation of resources for the church. ●

Don Klassen receives 2012 award

Donald Klassen of Harrisburg, S.D., is the recipient of the 2012 Alumni Ministry and Service Award.

The ministry to which Don has devoted almost half of his life is matching inmates of the South Dakota State Penitentiary with friends on the outside. For more than 32 years he coordinated the M-2 (man-to-man) program, a part-time role that was sponsored by different inter-church organizations.

Don began in the coordinator role in 1978, but reports that since the program began in 1972, more than 4,000 matches have been established. The program has received state and national recognition, and has resulted in an annual recidivism rate of less than one percent. Since 2005, Don has been adapting the concept to include county jails, and thus also include women and youth.

Don explains that when he visits the prison, "I not only represent myself, but also all the M-2s and the churches they come from and also the Association of Christian Churches of South Dakota. Most importantly, I need to represent the One Who gave His life for all humankind."

This commitment to Jesus Christ has been at the core of Don's life, but his decision to come to AMBS seemed somewhat spontaneous. During a 1967 communion service in his home congregation, Alexanderwohl Mennonite in Goessel, Kan., the question formed in his mind, "Why not teach Bible?" He was already teaching industrial arts, but applied to AMBS, arrived the next fall and completed an Master of Divinity in 1970.

The part-time nature of this ministry has allowed Don to give time in many other ways as well. He has been involved with Choice Books, Mennonite Central Committee relief sales, South Dakota Peace and Justice Center, South Dakota Association of Volunteer Leaders, South Dakota Prison Chaplains Association and Victim Offender Reconciliation Program, as well as his own congregation. In addition, his work and interests include tool and die making, raising hair sheep, planting a small orchard and building his own home.

Don credits the nursing vocation of Roine, his wife, for support that has allowed him to pursue such a wide variety of church and community involvements. They have one daughter and two grandchildren.

The award will be presented to Don this fall when he visits campus. ●

Can landscaping be beautiful and edible? Absolutely. When concerns have risen about safety and sustainability of foods, there is no better time than now to begin planting aesthetic edibles in the little piece of earth we may be granted to live upon.

Our backyard is a yearly work in progress, oftentimes negotiating with the birds as to who will get how much. Currently, we enjoy the summer fruiting of strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, elderberries, plums, beach plums, peaches and persimmon. And we keep adding. Last year it was a pear tree, this year apricots—dwarf, of course, as it is all on one-third of an acre of land. It is helpful to add extra plantings so the birds are bountifully fed, too. We included viburnum, extra strawberries and raspberries and one elderberry bush for them.

Speaking of fresh, colorful berries, many of these plants pack in powerful nutrition, as they are high in Vitamin C and antioxidants. Antioxidants help neutralize harmful byproducts of metabolism called free radicals. These free radicals are considered threats, often from environmental pollution or toxins that can initiate disease problems. Antioxidants may slow or possibly prevent cancer, heart disease, stroke and Alzheimer's disease.

It is important to plant edible preferences of family members. Our one son pleaded for a plum tree. It took 10 years until it really produced, but now it is a heavy bearer. There are tricks to working with freezing temperatures to protect the fragile blossoms and young fruit. Some throw sheets over a dwarf tree at night, but when the tree is 20 feet tall, another tip is to turn on a sprinkler hose as the temperature dips to 32 degrees. Allow the water to fully cover the tree, even though icicles may hang on it in the morning; it may save the day and the fruiting season. And then there may be bugs to contend with—use safe organic sprays.

Be adventuresome and choose plants that are beautiful throughout several seasons. We discovered that beach plums provide a lovely five-foot mass of white blooms in the spring that honeybees, bumblebees and butterflies love. Later, the colorful grape-sized plums change colors from green to yellow, orange, red and bluish purple. And the plum makes a delightfully tasty jelly.

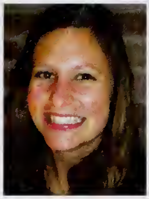
Be adventuresome and choose plants that are beautiful throughout several seasons.

Plant edibles close to where you will be more apt to use them. When we first moved to our current home, I planted many herbs where I could see them outside my kitchen window, but the distance to walk in inclement weather and obtain them for that evening's meal became a barrier. I transplanted all the herbs to an aromatic bed just outside our back door.

Finally, our annual vegetable garden plants are incorporated within the landscaping of the rest of the backyard. Tomatoes, garlic and green peppers are situated nearby daisies, black-eyed susans, and lavender plants. And with the help of rain barrels and a good compost bin, plants can thrive through hot summer days. Edible is incredible: less lawn to mow, more seeds to sow, God makes them grow, and the taste is "wow."

Sheryl Shenk is a member of Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church.

Upheld by a living cloud of witnesses



Hannah Heinzekehr of Claremont, Calif., is convention planning coordinator for Mennonite Church USA.

In the summer of 2001, I found myself thinking intentionally about transition for the first time in my life. I had just finished my sophomore year of high school, and people were asking me more often about my plans for college. I realized that some of my friends would be graduating and would no longer be staples in my high school hallways. I felt intimidated about taking standardized tests and figuring out "the future."

That summer, I biked with my church's youth group to the Mennonite Church USA convention in Nashville, Tenn. Over seven days, our group from Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind., encouraged and supported each other as we pushed our bodies hard on our pilgrimage to the convention. In Nashville, we participated in seven days of worship, servant projects, relationship-building and more with thousands of Mennonite youth from across the country.

> We hope each participant will wrestle with questions of faithfulness, discipleship and what it means to be church together.

Although that feels like a long time ago, I remember in particular a message given by Shirley Hershey Showalter, then president of Goshen College, during one of the youth worship services. She talked about the living cloud of witnesses who were present among us and had gone before us, and who were cheering for each of us youth in the worship hall. She invited a host of adults up onstage as a symbolic show of support and hope for our collective futures.

I remember being moved by the power inherent in this gesture. As I looked around at members of my youth group and my youth sponsors, I was struck by the knowledge that I was surrounded by people who loved me, supported me and would walk alongside me as I transitioned into each of these new life phases. When I applied for a job with Convention Planning late last year, it was stories and memories like these that reminded me that convention is a space of possibility—one I am excited to work with—and that informed my decision to step into this new leadership role.

One of the gifts of working at the denominational level is being able to work alongside people from all across the church and to develop a broader picture of what Mennonite identity looks like. Not long ago, I returned from a week of meetings in Phoenix with members of the committee charged with "putting flesh onto the bones" of youth worship services for next summer's convention there. This committee is a diverse group of people that includes pastors, high school students and young adults, people from all across the country, women and men, people from various racial/ethnic backgrounds, and individuals with diverse theological viewpoints.

As we sat around a table, brainstorming, praying together, reading the Scriptures for the week over and over and sharing times of fun and fellowship, I was struck by the realization that this process has continued for many years. With every two-year cycle, a new set of volunteers is willing to engage the convention themes and prayerfully work together to prepare a set of worship experiences to nourish, inspire and challenge convention attendees. All those who have participated in this process in the past, and those who are currently involved, have become part of the growing crowd of living witnesses who are planning and praying for all those who will come to the Phoenix convention.

At Phoenix 2013, we will explore questions of citizenship, allegiance and loyalty, working with the theme "Citizens of God's Kingdom: Healed in Hope/Ciudadanos del Reino de Dios: Sanados por la Esperanza." As we hear testimonies from people in our Mennonite communities and beyond who seek to live each day in ways that respond to God's unique call, we hope each participant will engage the question of what it means to be a Mennonite, an Anabaptist and a Christian today. We hope each participant will wrestle with questions of faithfulness, discipleship and what it means to be church together.

And I hope everyone who comes to convention who is like I was in 2001—unsure of their next steps or unclear about where they belong, no matter what their age—will feel at home and surrounded by a great, diverse cloud of living witnesses who believe in them, are cheering them on and are committed to walking this journey together. TM

Let's work for safe vaccines

We are parents of young adult sons who were mild on the autism spectrum but now have significantly recovered. We write to raise awareness and concerns about the article "We're All Connected and Therefore All Potentially Infected" (*The Mennonite*, November 2011). We support immunizations that prevent diseases and do not want to be misinterpreted as anti-vaccine. We affirm the author's intent of having readers pursue protection from diseases. We focus our response on the safety of our vaccines and why the public may hold some mistrust of science or agencies that seek to mandate them.

The medical field emphasizes evidence-based research, which informs and provides direction for medical practice. Much of this scientific research is financed by pharmaceutical companies, which have a vested interest in their test study outcomes. In contrast, independent research has at times been called "junk science," and some of it is questionable. But some is good research that does not get the media coverage it deserves. As a result, there is discrepancy in reports about the safety of vaccines.

Dr. Paul Offit, an oft-quoted spokesperson promoting vaccines and referred to in the November article, has financial connections with pharmaceutical companies and shares a patent for the Rotavirus vaccine. His push for mandatory vaccinations alarms those who believe not all vaccines are safe. In the past three decades, the recommended number of childhood vaccines has more than tripled. Within this same time frame, we have seen an explosion in neurological disorders, from ADHD to autism and, in the elderly, Alzheimer's. Many parents, medical providers and independent scientists are concerned.

Some independent research points to the use of a preservative in vaccines, thimerosal, which contains mercury, a known neurotoxin, as a contributing factor to neurological disorders. Two nonprofit organizations, SafeMinds and Coalition for Mercury-free Drugs (CoMeD), have links to studies and research that explores this plausibility. Although many of the childhood immunizations in the United States and Europe have had thimerosal removed, pharmaceutical companies have not eliminated it from childhood immunizations sent to developing countries.

In the United States, thimerosal continues to be used as a preservative in more than half the flu shots, which are recommended annually for pregnant women, children and adults of all ages. Perhaps some caregivers have not been made aware that thimerosal remains in the multidose vial of the flu shot and that the single-dose alternative, a thimerosal-free flu shot, is a safer choice.

We have sons who were impacted by mercury in vaccines. We are grateful for the expertise of their physicians, who performed lab tests that identified this toxin in their bodies and provided a protocol that led our children to much-improved health and functioning.

How can the church enter the conversation of seeking safety within our vaccines? In 2008, the United Methodist Church's General Conference approved a global resolution entitled "Protecting Children from Mercury-Containing Drugs."

Other organizations have addressed safety issues at national and global levels. Both SafeMinds and CoMeD presented data on thimerosal at a June 27-July 2 session of the United Nations Environment Programme Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. This committee is preparing a global, legally binding instrument on mercury, reducing its toxic impact upon the world.

We raise questions for broader discernment: With mandatory vaccinations, how can recipients make informed choices if concerned about safety? Are vaccine profits a higher priority than safety? When developed countries receive thimerosal-free childhood immunizations, why do developing countries not have access to the same? How does one justify inclusion of an unnecessary and often undisclosed toxin, thimerosal, in modern vaccines? The documentary film *The Greater Good* (2011) communicates wider vaccine safety concerns than we have articulated here; the issue is complex. The film offers a window into conversations on both sides of the vaccine debate and presents discussion on moving toward a safer vaccine program.

Mennonites are involved globally in peace and justice issues. We urge our faith community to ask probing questions and pursue a just path for ongoing neurological impairment occurring within some of our vulnerable populations from administration of some potentially unsafe vaccines. As we seek vaccinations against diseases, may we also attend to vaccine safety. TM

Sheryl Shenk is a member of Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church.

Yvonne Hershey is a member of Hershey Mennonite Church in Kinzers, Pa.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Western District amends one resolution, tables another

Pastor who performed same-sex covenanting ceremony deemed 'at variance'

Laurie Oswald Robinson

Suhelen Cazares (left) from Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania in Newton, Kan., holds a wheat stalk used as a "talking stick" at her delegate table. At right is Linda Shelly of Mennonite Mission Network, who served as translator for the WDC assembly and was a delegate from First Mennonite Church in Newton.

Meeting July 6-8 in Oklahoma City, Western District Conference (WDC) delegates deliberated over two resolutions and decided to amend one and table the other.

One resolution, brought by Bethel Mennonite Church in Inman, Kan., called on the leadership commission of WDC to "suspend the credentials of Joanna Harader," pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan. Harader performed a same-sex ceremony in 2010. The following spring, WDC's leadership commission voted 4-2 to find her credentials in order.

In introducing the resolution, Max Fuqua of Bethel Church said the church feels disrespected, that the leadership commission went against clear statements of WDC. He called its ruling "outrageous" and "rebellious."

Delegates met in table groups to discuss the resolution. During deliberation as a larger group, Mike Fetters from Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan., introduced an amendment that said: "We find Joanna Harader's credentials in order. However, it will be noted on her Ministerial Leadership Information form that her action in performing a same-sex union is at variance with the Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines."

After discussion, delegates voted 184-154 to amend the resolution. After more discussion, the amended resolution passed by a vote of 203-136.

The second resolution, brought by three WDC churches in Oklahoma, asked that WDC leadership "acknowledge as official position the current *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*." David Wiens, pastor of Eden Mennonite Church in Inola, Okla., introduced this resolution and said, "It seems we have kicked it [the confession] to the side."

One delegate asked how adhering to the confession should be enforced. Wiens said the confession is "a framework for interpreting Scripture. ... We're not trying to create a police state." The resolution calls on leaders to follow their conscience.

Before the resolution could be discussed in the larger body, David Habegger of Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kan., brought a motion to table it, saying that in 1995, when the Confession was adopted by the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church, "it was understood to be a teaching document, not a legislative document."

Delegates then voted in favor of tabling the resolution by a vote of 170-167.

In an interview afterward, outgoing moderator Doug Penner said, "This close a vote is not what we would hope for." He noted, however, that "in the past couple of months there have been good conversations," and "hopefully that can continue," adding that "voting is our least favorite way of resolving these issues."

Three speakers addressed the conference's theme, "Becoming One to Be Sent in Christ." Conference minister Clarence Rempel spoke on "God's Dream, Our Dream" and noted that the church in the New Testament was at its missional best when it was experiencing ethical and doctrinal disagreement.

Chuck Neufeld, conference minister for Illinois Mennonite Conference, gave two sermons. The first, "If Christ Is Our Center, We Must Be One," encouraged participants to hold onto one another's perspectives with grace. "Any voice that tells us to think the worst of a brother or sister in Christ is not the voice of Jesus, and we should let it go," he said.

Neufeld's second sermon came on Saturday evening, after the afternoon delegate session. He recalled the story of the disciples in a storm at sea waking up Jesus. "Whatever chaos is going on," he said, "we can wake up Jesus, and he will not be anxious." He added, "Is it possible to grant each other freedom, even if we think they're sinning?"

At Sunday's final worship session, Eugene Thieszen, pastor of Herold Mennonite Church in Cordell, Okla., spoke on "Dancing with God." He spoke of the unity that exists in the Holy Trinity and said, "We try to make unity happen, but we will always fail. Instead we are invited to join the unity that already exists."—*Gordon Houser*

Phoenix 2013 'culmination of ... biennium'

Planners are exploring ways to engage Arizona's immigration law.

Phoenix 2013 is now less than one year away. The next Mennonite Church USA convention is scheduled for July 1-6, 2013. Convention planners are working to involve and connect people from around the church.

"We want to be intentional," said Glen Guyton on July 5. "We want to make sure we get the different stories from around the church."

Guyton is director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board.

Hoping to make unprecedented use of social media and online discussions, the website for Phoenix 2013 now features a place for anyone to submit their favorite memories, stories, photos and advice from conventions past.

Due to a controversial immigration law—Senate Bill 1070—Phoenix 2013 has been one of the most "talked about" conventions ever, according to Guyton.

"We want to stay engaged," Guyton said. "Even though the Phoenix decision was made, we still have a lot of work to do."

Guyton also emphasized that the convention is more than just five days in Phoenix.

"Convention is supposed to be the culmination of what's been going on for the last biennium and looking forward to the next," he said.

In June, André Gingerich Stoner, spent five days in Phoenix exploring possibilities for public witness events for participants at the convention.

He was joined in this exploration by Jason Boone, coordinating minister for the Peace and Justice Support Network, and Hannah Heinzekehr from the convention planning office. Stoner is director of holistic witness and interchurch relations (see the editorial on page 56).

The group met with Mennonite pastors, a Methodist missionary based in Phoenix who is working on immigration issues, some immigrant advocates and city officials. They also joined a large interfaith witness outside the tent city detention center run by Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

"[Arpaio] corrals men and women there who don't have their papers," wrote Stoner in a blog post on mennocon.com. "He keeps them outside day and night, in 110-degree Arizona summers and 40-degree winters. This is just one expression of our broken immigration system."

Stoner mentioned some "imaginings" the group had after its recent time in Phoenix: an evening prayer walk downtown Phoenix, early morning prayer circles outside the county jail near the convention center, opportunities for conventiongoers to hear immigrant's stories, and a bus of Mennonites in a traveling choir singing at a nursing home, a mall and detainees at Sheriff Arpaio's tent city.

Hannah Heinzekehr

Mennonite Church USA convention planners attend a tent-city vigil in Phoenix in June.

"After convention, we can see Mennonites going back home and together with others visiting detainees and holding prayer vigils at detention centers in our own backyards," Stoner wrote.

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations held its annual convention in Phoenix June 20-24. Heinzekehr, along with Boone and Stoner, spent time observing the Unitarian convention.

"During the week, leaders worked to educate people about how conversations about immigration touch them in their home communities and about how racism—which is inherent in some of these laws and public policies—still hurts the entire denominational body," she said on July 8.

After convention, we can see Mennonites going back home and together with others visiting detainees and holding prayer vigils at detention centers in our own backyards.—André Gingerich Stoner

Heinzekehr said that while Mennonite Church USA does not align theologically with the Unitarian Universalist church, the "spirit with which they came to Phoenix really echoes the ways we are trying work at our own planning," she said.

More concrete plans for Phoenix 2013 will continue to unfold in the coming year.

Guyton said, "We are still in the planning stages. We don't want to make promises we can't keep."—*Anna Groff*

New church has Voluntary Service roots

Anabaptist Fellowship of Alamosa (Colo.) is the result of cooperation.

Gordon Miller

From left: Nicole Bontrager, a former MVS participant, Sue Miller and Sarah Hiebert, both current MVS participants, provide special music for a Sunday evening worship service.

Anabaptist Fellowship of Alamosa (Colo.) is an example of what can happen when partners unite around a common goal.

The fellowship, which joined Mountain States Mennonite Conference in August 2011, is the result of years of presence by Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) in the San Luis Valley, financial support from Mountain States Conference and Mennonite Mission Network, and a leap of faith by a group of Mennonites who have lived in the valley for years.

The 15-member church has been meeting for nearly two years. One goal, according to MVS coordinator Alice Price, is to be a place of spiritual grounding for the MVS unit that recently moved to Alamosa from its longtime home in neighboring La Jara. The connection is so close, in fact, that for the first year the church met in the MVS house.

"Part of the vision was to provide a spiritual home not only for Mennonite volunteers who are passing through for a year or two," says Price, who has coordinated the MVS unit for 20 years, "but also for other young adults who were coming into the community for similar purposes and might not have a natural church base."

MVS has a long history in the San Luis Valley, an expansive alpine desert valley and agricultural region and one of the poorest parts of Colorado. The unit was formed in 1983 to staff the Conejos County Hospital in La Jara, which, like many of the rural hospitals in Colorado, was under Mennonite administration at that time.

When the hospital was turned over to local leadership in the early 1990s and had less need for medical volunteers, unit administrators and Mennonite Mission Network personnel decided to maintain the MVS unit in La Jara to continue its growing involvements with other community needs.

"Most of our placements now are not health-care related; we've been working for many years with other needs, including domestic violence services, immigration services, homeless prevention programs and restorative justice," Price says.

These positions are primarily based in Alamosa, the county seat and a hub for many of the area's nonprofit agencies. The volunteers were spending significant time and money driving 15 miles to and from work. It made sense to explore moving the unit to Alamosa as well.

The unit's first need was an affordable home. While Mennonite Mission Network normally does not purchase MVS unit houses, instead leaving housing logistics to the host community, the organization had long owned the house where volunteers lived in La Jara. Mission Network agreed to make all the funds from the sale of the house available for the purchase of a new house, but there were still challenges to overcome. The housing market, which had never been strong in the valley, had recently bottomed out, and putting the house on the market was risky. Without the proceeds from the sale of the house, the unit could not afford to move to Alamosa.

"Alice took a great step of faith herself," says Del Hershberger, director of Mission Network's Christian Service programs. "She and her husband, Andy Zaugg, actually purchased a property in Alamosa even before they worked out the details of whether they could sell the house in La Jara and transfer the money. They essentially provided a bridge loan on that property."

The house did sell, and Mission Network made the net funds available toward the purchase of the property in Alamosa.

The unit's second need was a spiritual home. A small, aging Presbyterian church in La Jara had welcomed the young adults for the first two decades of Mennonite presence. Later, some MVS members began attending a Methodist church in Alamosa that shared the MVS values of ministering to the needs of the community.

But those who had lived in the valley for many years longed for an Anabaptist community. So initially, a small

Mikaila Holt

Alice Price, a longtime local MVS coordinator in Alamosa, Colo., and her husband, Andy Zaugg, provided a bridge loan to purchase a new home (shown here) for the MVS unit when it moved from La Jara to Alamosa.

group of worshipers met at the Alamosa MVS house on Thursday evenings for a year, beginning with worship and ending with a fellowship meal. When they outgrew the house, they moved to a Presbyterian church building in September 2011. They changed the worship time to Sunday evenings and still eat together after every service.

In an effort to include friends and neighbors, the members of the fellowship have experimented with different outreach strategies. One month they showed and discussed a film at a fellowship member's home. The next month, on Palm Sunday, they traveled to the outdoor Stations of the Cross created by a local sculptor in the town of San Luis.

"We're thinking that once a month we'll do something that has broader interest and might be a little bit easier to invite a friend to come to," Price says.

The church plant exemplifies cooperation. MVS's long-term presence in the valley led to the need for a church. Congregants at the grass-roots level provided the vision. Mission Network contributed proceeds from the sale of the La Jara house, and Mountain States Conference's SEED Project—a conference initiative that provides startup money for mission efforts—has contributed money to help with transition costs for Katie and Luke Yoder, who moved from Denver to give leadership to the fledgling church.

Luke Yoder served a two-year MVS term in La Jara in the mid-2000s and is now executive director at the agency he worked for—the Center for Restorative Programs. Another former MVS participant, Nicole Bontrager, has also stayed on in Alamosa with her former agency and become part of the leadership team for this church plant.

Hershberger says the partnership was a chance for Mission Network to support the creation of a new faith community.

"Although MMN could have used the proceeds from the La Jara house sale for other ministry, it feels particularly meaningful to be able to invest in local ministry with long-time partners that are doing something new," Hershberger says. "We felt like it was such an important opportunity to be in partnership with the conference and this new church plant."

Herm Weaver, the Mountain States conference minister, agrees.

"So many times the only way most of us can view things is from our own little fiefdoms and what's good for us," Weaver says. "This would be one of the small examples of people getting beyond their fiefdoms and saying, 'Hey, this makes sense for the good of the whole, and we'll contribute our little piece.' "

MVS's work over three decades was a significant reason the church came about at all.

"It's very clear that there would be no church plant if there was no MVS because MVS is what brings people there and people stay on," Weaver says.

Price adds that the MVS volunteers are important for sustaining social outreach efforts in the valley.

"In rural areas, funds are tight, and these are small agencies," Price says. "Our MVSers have been able to make that difference in providing sustainable, high-quality services that wouldn't have been affordable for these small nonprofits."

For Weaver, the new church plant has personal significance. His daughter, Chloe Weaver, was killed in 2010 while riding her bicycle near Alamosa after having just begun an MVS term. The memories are raw, he says, but the new fellowship fills him with gratitude.

"I'm extremely grateful to Mission Network for their willingness to participate in this project," he says. "My daughter was a part of that unit. And I'm grateful that the conference supports these things. But it's the people on the ground that make this happen. Luke, Katie, Alice, Andy and Nicole—it's really the people on the ground that deserve most of the kudos."—*Andrew Clouse of Mission Network*

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MCC moves files from MC USA Archives

Some historians and archivists are concerned about relocation plan.

Mennonite Central Committee Archives

Civilian Public Service camp 103, Missoula, Mt.: Smoke jumper parachuting in Montana, 1943-1946 during World War II, to help put out a forest fire.

Mennonite Central Committee staff members believe that the decision to transfer MCC's archival collections from the Mennonite Church USA Archives in Goshen, Ind., to the MCC U.S. offices in Akron, Pa., is a short-term stirring of the waters for long-term benefit.

However, some Anabaptist historians and archivists are concerned that the relocation of a major portion of MCC's historic records—all U.S. and international files dating before 1984—may unravel the holistic sense of the Anabaptist story, complicate researchers' work and compromise access to the collection. MCC staff members maintain that the move will address fiscal, logistical and relational issues. They plan to proceed with relocation of 1,200 linear feet of material from Goshen to Akron in late August.

"Working with the materials more directly will give MCC records staff greater familiarity with the materials so they can better help MCC use its history to serve its present and future needs," says Ron Byler, executive director of MCC U.S. "And working more directly with researchers will give staff a better sense of who beyond MCC is studying our history and where our history is being cited."

Other benefits of the archives transfer include cost savings and relationship-building, he says. MCC never turned over ownership of its records to the Mennonite Church USA Archives but rather housed them there for a linear-foot-based fee of $37,000 annually. According to Byler, the long-term savings will offset the short-term costs of relocation and remodeling space needed for the new site.

"A major future goal is to scan significant portions of our files and photographs so they can be easily accessed," Byler says. "Having materials here will facilitate working at that project."

Following the transfer, MCC will have its entire international and U.S. historical collection in one location: MCC U.S.'s former printing press room—soon to be installed with a fire-rated wall and door to ensure lockdown; a fire suppression system; an upgrade of the HVAC system; and archival shelving and lighting. The storage of these collections is important but not more so than preservation of the "soul" of the Anabaptist story, say various Anabaptist historians, archivists and researchers.

"Mennonites are a people whose identity is formed by story," says John D. Roth, professor at Goshen College and director of the Mennonite Historical Library. "How we preserve these records are not simply technical questions of keeping them dry and well organized. We also have a long tradition of gathering archival records in ways that enable historians to give the fullest possible account of our past."

For example, the identity of the wider Mennonite church in the 20th century has been shaped significantly by MCC, he says. Through relief work, Civilian Public Service in World War II and the development of mental health institutions, MCC galvanized the wider Mennonite church's involvements and helped it move from a more sectarian identity to engagement with the world.

"By having all the collections located in one place, researchers could make connections easily between the work of MCC and the denomination and collections of individuals such as the late Orie O. Miller [an early MCC leader], which help interpret MCC's impact upon the wider church," Roth says. "The decision to extract and isolate some MCC collections from the Mennonite Church USA Archives will make it more difficult for historians to tell a full-orbed, nuanced account of our collective story."

Colleen McFarland, MC USA Goshen archivist, hopes the work of researchers will not be unduly restricted by differing access policies after the relocation, noting that 90 to 95 percent of the requests for access to MCC records have come from researchers not affiliated with MCC. "MCC's access policies are more restrictive than Mennonite Church USA's and include screening researchers and requiring information about their final product," she says. "As an archivist and professional working in a church-related sphere supported by donors, I believe that people have a right to know and that it is not in our place to decide whether their research is worthy."—*From a release by Laurie Oswald Robinson for Mennonite Church USA*

Survey to shape future of Mennonite worship music

MennoMedia project prepares way for next published song collection.

In preparation for the next published Mennonite song collection, MennoMedia, the publishing agency of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, completed a major song survey of congregations across North America. Originally commissioned by the Binational Worship Council, this survey will help inform a committee appointed by MennoMedia and the denominations as they begin to shape the next Mennonite song collection.

Begun in September 2011, the nine-month survey was completed on May 1; however, churches had until June 1 to make their final submissions. In order to determine what songs Mennonites were already singing, congregations were asked to submit the songs they sang each week over the survey period, including music from special services and weekly events.

Over the course of the nine-month survey, 191 congregations submitted more than 32,000 song entries. These songs came from 118 different collections. Of those songs, almost 75 percent came from the current *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and its two supplements *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*. Other collections frequently cited included Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI), *Mennonite Hymnal* (1969) and *Sing and Rejoice!*, as well as a significant number of congregations that compile their own collections. Both MC USA and MC Canada had about 26 percent participation from their respective congregations, as well as five Mennonite education institutions from across the country.

Erwin Rempel, retired senior executive for Mennonite Mission Network, volunteered hundreds of hours with MennoMedia to help collect and organize the incoming data over the course of the survey. He kept tabs on which congregations were reporting—and how frequently—and tracked down missing pieces of information at the end of the survey period.

Amy Gingerich, director of print media and co-chair of the Binational Worship Council, says the committee envisioned this survey as the first step toward a new Mennonite song collection.

"The results of this survey tell us what large congregations are singing compared with small congregations, as well as what urban versus rural congregations are singing," says Gingerich. "The data also tells us what new songs have staying power and what old songs are no longer used. We will be spending lots of time analyzing the data to look for emerging patterns. We want to make sure any future Mennonite song collection is a theologically and musically sound resource that meets the demands of our congregations."

Once organized, the complete data set will be given to the Binational Worship Council as committee members discern next steps toward a new song collection. The most current comprehensive Mennonite song collection, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. *—Michael Spory of MennoMedia*

Top 10 songs Mennonites love:

1. The Love of God
2. Joy to the World
3. Praise God From Whom
4. O Come, All Ye Faithful
5. The Lord Lift You Up
6. Longing for Light
7. Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
8. Lord, You Sometimes Speak
9. Great Is Thy Faithfulness
10. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Source: MennoMedia

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ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)
MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS

JAMAICA - Its PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 11-20)
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
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MEDA in MOROCCO (April 2-12)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25)
MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-24)
LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN and CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28-May 7)
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EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15)
GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 24-June 6)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 6-19)
ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (July 23-August 3)
RUSSIA and UKRAINE: The MENNONITE STORY (September 4-16)
THE BRITISH ISLES (England, Scotland and Wales) with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (October 17-28)
CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (November 1-15)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR RICH BUCHER (November 5-14)
EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (December 9-15)

2014 TOURS

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Style through sewing, swapping and scavenging

Mennonite women share their tips on socially conscious shopping and fashion.

Moving beyond plain clothes and coverings, Mennonite women continue to find ways to express themselves, their faith and their values through their clothing choices.

Sewing one's own clothing, shopping at consignment stores, creatively putting together colorful outfits and hosting clothing swaps offer several avenues for self-expression.

Kathleen Temple is a professional tailor in Harrisonburg, Va. A former pastor and philosophy and religion professor at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., for 10 years, she has spent the rest of her career in dress-making.

Temple believes clothing is about expressing oneself and connecting with others.

"Being human is being able to connect with other things in our world in meaningful ways," she says.

Her work ranges from elaborate wedding dresses with couture effects to helping customers sew the zippers on their dresses to repairing favorite jeans.

She opened her own studio in 2010 and also sells clothing through her site on etsy.com. She also showcases her work on her blog (http://kathleentemple.blogspot.com/).

Kathleen Temple models one of her creations. "I embellished my original design black rayon faille pinafore with hand pick stitching up the front and up the back," she says.

Temple, of Shalom Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., says one reason custom-dress-making is making a comeback is that many women have lost interest in dressing out of the "big box stores."

"We want our own creations," she says. She also named the "high cost of cheap clothing." The cost of ready-made clothing is often externalized through environment costs and sweatshop labor.

Growing up in Phoenix, Temple says her mother had a passion for clothing, style and fashion. After first using her mother's sewing machine at age 9, she began her 50-year journey in sewing that includes working at a bridal shop, a high-end department store, a tailoring shop and more.

In a local NPR story, Temple describes a favorite element of her work: coaching clients who want to change their personal styles. One customer from California told Temple she wanted to move away from her usual "uniform" as an architect that meant wearing mostly black and dark gray. Now pregnant, she felt ready to incorporate brilliant colors into her wardrobe. She sent Temple some colorful silk material for a V-neck dress that Temple later named the "Colorfest Dress." This dress was the "exact opposite" of her typical professional clothing, Temple says.

Other women, such as Cyneatha Millsaps, sew as a life-giving hobby. Like Temple, Millsaps learned from her mother how to sew, and she also appreciates fashion. While in school, she sewed outfits cheaply by using affordable fabrics and stayed up with the trends other girls wore. Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill., and a columnist for *The Mennonite*.

Now she uses vintage patterns to sew retro dresses. She made a '40s-style dress for New Year's Eve several years ago and a '50s-style dress for Easter. She bought a pattern for an 18th-century-style dress and hopes to take photos of the final product but says she does not yet know where she will wear it.

Millsaps uses her talent generously. This summer she is working on a late-'40s-style dress for a woman from Community Mennonite. The woman will wear it to her 80th birthday party in August.

Cyneatha Millsaps

Kate Wentland also sews her own clothing, such as blouses and fabric purses. Part of her commitment to simple living, Wentland sews to use fewer resources, recycle fabrics, shop less and create high-quality clothes. However, "simple living doesn't mean boring," she says.

Much of Wentland's clothing include many colors and funky embellishments. She often chooses to follow patterns.

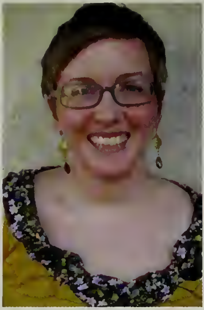
"Sewing really isn't that hard," she says. "You can build up your skills gradually."

Wentland graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., this year. She sewed her own dress for the ceremony.

"While I embrace the value of living simply and using fewer resources, I don't think it's necessary to eliminate beauty and good design," she wrote in a blog post on

Femonite. "I make things by hand not only because they are cute but because I'm saving money and sometimes recycling materials."

Upon graduation, Wentland took a position with Mennonite Central Committee teaching at a seminary in China. She plans on starting a crafting and sewing group with her students.


Kate Wentland wears a homemade blouse

Another option to reuse includes thrift and consignment shopping—an activity Hannah Heinzekehr enjoys. Heinzekehr is convention planning coordinator for Mennonite Church USA.

Heinzekehr acknowledges that thrift-store shopping can require multiple and longer visits to sort through all the racks, but it allows one to build a much more eclectic wardrobe. She remembers that in high school and college many of her friends shopped at the same stores, such as Target, Gap and Kohl's.

Hannah Heinzekehr

"It wasn't that uncommon that you would show up someplace wearing the same shirt or outfit as someone else," she says.

Her recycling clothing strategy includes buying key staples like jeans and cardigans new, as she finds herself more particular about how these fit and look.

In her blog on Femonite, Heinzekehr writes about theologian Karen Baker Fletcher's concept that bright colors should be considered "earth tones" just as much as browns and blacks are.

"Bright colors echo beauty in nature, too," says Heinzekehr.

Yvonne Diaz shares Heinzekehr's passion for bright colors and thrift shopping.

"[In my] cultural background—Mexican-Latina—bright, intense colors are the norm," she says. Diaz also grew up with the value of dressing up for work and church. Diaz has worked for Iglesia Menonita Hispana and Mennonite Central Committee. Still, Diaz finds ways to shop at Goodwill and put together timeless, formal outfits that include bright colors.

"I've never been into [trends]," she says. "I don't care if a piece is dated." For example, she found a belted, polka-dotted retro dress that she received many compliments on.

She is an experienced Goodwill shopper and can "go through a rack fairly quickly." Sometimes she finds clothing for her daughters. She also trades clothes with her sister to expand her wardrobe for mixing and matching.

Other women choose to reuse and recycle clothes by hosting and attending clothing swaps.

Yovana Bontrager of Pittsburgh, Pa., describes a clothing swap as an event where a group brings their "no-longer-wanted clothing, shoes and accessories" to a host's house.

Yvonne Diaz and her husband wear Goodwill outfits.

Bontrager recommends participants drop off their clothes in advance to allow the host to organize and set up the items by category, color or size in easy-to-sort systems.

All participants then go through the items to find "new treasures" for themselves, she says. The host is responsible for delivering the remaining items to a thrift store.

A clothing swap provides a reason to clean out one's closet and often gives the participants satisfaction of shopping through reusing and without spending money. Her favorite item from a swap is a big black tote in great condition that she uses often.

"Sometimes it's easier to part with beloved garments that no longer fit when you know they can be used by friends," she says. And it is an affirming experience to try on clothes with friends and receive feedback, she says.

"I'm a small person, so I often acquire people's favorite items that had the misfortune of shrinking in the dryer," she says. "I've gotten a lot of great sweaters this way."

Bontrager recommends setting up guidelines for participants, such as "anything goes" or "nothing with holes or stains." She also says providing refreshments or hosting a potluck adds to the fun.—*Anna Groff; this originally appeared on the* Timbrel *website*

Yovana Bontrager (left) wears a "recycled" outfit.

Young adults get interested in agriculture

Mennonite colleges create garden plots, summer course in agroecology.

Josh Kanagy

From foreground to background: Emma Dalen, Elisha Keener, Phillip Martin, and Lauren Bykowski work in the garden at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

"When I first began to learn about the realities of our current food system, I was appalled at the detriment to both people and the earth," says Meg Smeltzer, a junior at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va. She says that food subsidies in developing countries create an unfair market and contribute to the cycle of poverty. In the United States, consumers have ready access to cheap food because farm workers elsewhere receive poor wages and little respect.

Another concern to students is soil health. Jacob Landis grew up on his family's dairy and grain farm in Sterling, Ill., which has transitioned to organic practices and became certified organic about three years ago. Through this change, the Landis family became aware of how detrimental conventional farming can be to the land.

Anhydrous ammonia, a common form of nitrogen fertilizer, was originally used to compact the soil for runways in remote areas, says Landis, an agricultural science major at Hesston (Kan.) College. This input, combined with various pesticides, results in dead soil. Landis points out that the suffix "-cide" means death. Alternatively, he likes to think of biological farming "as using the life that God put in the soil to grow the crops instead of making a chemically balanced plant food."

Although not all students interested in sustainable agriculture want to own farms, Landis would like to be a farmer someday. He appreciates that farmers are their own bosses and that despite having a routine, every day holds both challenges and rewards.

"There is always a chance that things won't work out as planned," he says, "and it forces you to trust in God."

Hannah Eberly, a Goshen (Ind.) College senior, also sees the spirituality in agriculture.

"I find that centering myself with the changing of the seasons keeps me rooted and emotionally sustained," she says. Eberly, who grew up on an 80-acre livestock farm in Harrisonburg, enjoys gardening as well as canning and freezing. Although her career path in nursing will not allow time for farming, she definitely wants to have a garden someday.

For Josh Kanagy, a senior at EMU, this love for the earth is also inherent.

"I grew up with dirt under my fingernails," he says. "My mom and grammy loved to garden, and they passed that love on to me. It doesn't matter if I'm planting something, mulching or just pulling weeds; being outside and feeling the sun on my face gives me energy."

Mennonite colleges have caught on to this trend, and are offering ways for students to get involved in sustainable agriculture.

At Hesston (Kan.) College, the student garden club manages a 40-by-60-foot plot, part of which lies on a neighboring property belonging to Paul Diener. Faculty and staff volunteer to help in the garden during summer vacation.

The college also owns a conventionally farmed 60-acre tract of land that may be changed to include a CSA (community supported agriculture), test plots, livestock, biofuel crops, an orchard or some combination of these.

In the spring of 2010, Emma Regier helped start the Sand Creek Community Garden, a collaboration between Bethel College, Bethel College Mennonite Church and the City of North Newton, Kan. Regier, a junior biology major at Bethel, organized a student plot this year "for students who are interested in gardening but don't have experience or time to have their own plot. It has been a lot of fun—so far we have peas, spinach, radishes, lettuce and potatoes planted."

EMU not only has a campus garden and composting but a small flock of chickens maintained by their Sustainable Food Initiative club. SFI plans to set up a small CSA this summer for the produce that, during the school year, goes to the campus dining hall.

Goshen College offers an agroecology concentration for environmental science majors, which includes an Agroecology Summer Intensive that spans two months every summer. In this program, available to students of all disciplines, participants take four hands-on courses while living together at Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center. Goshen also has began composting on campus.

Farming is not new to the Goshen College curriculum; the school bought its first farm in 1909 to provide food to the dining hall and jobs and scholarships to students. In 1914, Goshen traded its first farm, located west of campus across the Elkhart River, for 60 acres along College Avenue. This new farm resulted from church leaders at that time urging young Mennonites to return to their rural communities to serve their churches there.

However, according to John Sylvanus in his book *Goshen College 1894-1954*, few students showed any interest in the program, including those from farming backgrounds. Some professors even discouraged students from participating in the School of Agriculture because they believed it did not "offer courses of sufficient scholastic value and dignity." In addition, because of World War I, many men went back to their family farms in anticipation of a food shortage. Only one young man ever received a B.S. in agriculture from Goshen College.

Although the department eventually dissolved, Goshen again offered agriculture courses in the 1940s and '50s. Hesston College also had a farm, from 1913 to 1956.

So what makes Goshen's Agroecology Summer Intensive more successful? Interest. College agriculture programs today are a result of increased student interest in the subject. When asked if she sees a growing trend in young adults toward sustainable agriculture, Maria Bowman says, "Oh yes, I believe it." The 2009 EMU graduate says that more young adults attended this year's Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture conference than any other year.

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Leah Rittenhouse

Mariah Martin works in the Hesston (Kan.) College garden.

Bowman worked with New Community Project (NCP), a faith-based nonprofit that emphasizes environmental education and community outreach, at its location in Harrisonburg from spring 2010 through summer 2011. She helped initiate a school garden education program alongside Adam Campbell at Linville Edom Elementary and held weekly garden classes at Eastern Mennonite Elementary School. During the summer of 2011, she joined volunteers and interns at NCP's sustainable living homestead in growing and harvesting produce for the Friendly City Food Co-op and running errands with bicycle trailers.

Last August, Bowman moved to Pittsburgh, where she serves in the Edible Schoolyard through AmeriCorps. The Edible Schoolyard is part of Grow Pittsburgh, an urban agriculture nonprofit with a mission to demonstrate, teach and promote responsible food production. Bowman uses raised-bed gardens at two public elementary schools to teach students about plant needs, insects, compost, cooperation and cooking. She believes in the importance of not only preserving the earth for future generations but in teaching them how to care for it.

"There's a quiet revolution going on," she says, "and it's happening on rural farms, urban schoolyards and in the kitchens of my peers as they can, pickle and mince. We see what's happening in today's food system and know that apathy isn't going to fix anything."—*Serena Townsend, intern for* The Mennonite *this spring*

Noah's ark reenactment draws 5,000

Willow Street (Pa.) Mennonite event raises funds for wells overseas.

Mary Lou Sherer

Girls representing the colors of the rainbow dance as part of the final scene in the story of Noah's ark.

Mary Lou Sherer

A guest encounters a goat in her walk-through of Noah's "ark" at the West Lampeter (Pa.) Township fairground June 16-17.

Water. Whether too much or not enough, it played a prominent role in the theme of the Noah's Ark event held June 16-17 at the West Lampeter (Pa.) Township fairgrounds and sponsored in part by Willow Street (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Organizers say that more than 5,000 people took a walk through four scenes featuring Noah, his wife (named Nora for the event) and his three sons and daughters-in-law.

The scenes led viewers through God's first call to Noah through the building of the ark, the mockery of neighbors, life in the ark at the beginning of the flood (complete with live animals) and finally emergence from the ark into the sunlight. The final scene included an interpretive dance rainbow.

To see Christians unite and work hard at bringing glory to God: it doesn't get much better than that!—Joe Sherer

Pastors from several of the churches gave a short interpretation of the Noah story after each group journeyed through the four scenes, and a community worship service was held on Sunday morning.

"Seeing people come—young and old, families, children, couples—and knowing that they would hear God's Word and the gospel message itself, was extremely gratifying," says Joe Sherer, Willow Street Mennonite pastor.

After going through the scenes, attendees ate snacks (for free) at Mrs. Noah's Diner, checked out a petting zoo, did crafts, visited a prayer tent and learned about water projects. Donations from the event went to Eastern Mennonite Missions in order to drill wells and provide clean water systems to Burkina Faso and Laos.

The seeds of the event were planted when Mary Louise Hostetter, missions director at Willow Street Mennonite, wanted to find ways to get beyond the church walls and out into the community. Jane Weigel, children's ministry director at Lampeter (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, had a similar vision for an alternative to Vacation Bible School. The two women began meeting and praying together in January and brainstorming grew from there. They decided to hold the walk-thru in lieu of a traditional VBS and invited other churches from their community to help. Hostetter and Weigel cochaired the event. A dozen churches from a variety of denominations came together to support the project, with about 200 volunteers.

"People helped until they were exhausted, but I haven't heard anyone voice a sentiment that it wasn't worth it all," Sherer says. "To see Christians unite and work hard at bringing glory to God: it doesn't get much better than that."—*Melanie Hess for* The Mennonite

Syrian fighting forces children from orphanage

Mennonite Central Committee and Syrian Orthodox Church support the orphans.

Bishop Selwanos Petros al-Nemeh of the Syrian Orthodox Church stands in front of a wall riddled with bullet holes at the evacuated orphanage at the Syrian Coptic Church in Homs, Syria.

An armed opposition group is positioned behind the orphanage located on the grounds of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Homs, Syria. The opposition trades shelling with government forces in front of the church.

The orphanage and the church are caught in the middle. In January, 20 orphans, ages 6 to 18, were evacuated from the orphanage, where they had regular meals, structured activities and tutoring and where they received spiritual and emotional support from the priests and the house mothers.

Bombing caused the church roof to collapse in early June, and the damage continues.

The Syrian Orthodox Church and Mennonite Central Committee, who supported the orphans at the orphanage, continue to provide for them by supporting their relatives, who are now caring for them indefinitely. In many cases, these are the same family members who turned the children over to the orphanage because they struggled to care for them, says Sarah Adams, MCC representative living in Lebanon and overseeing MCC programs there and in Syria.

"A big concern is that they've lost their support system and what's familiar to them. ... The one place they felt safe became the same place they heard shooting," she says.

Bishop Selwanos Petros al-Nemeh, who used to live at the church, is keeping in touch with them through their relatives and provides for their needs.—*Linda Espenshade of Mennonite Central Committee*

Nutritionist feeds souls through art

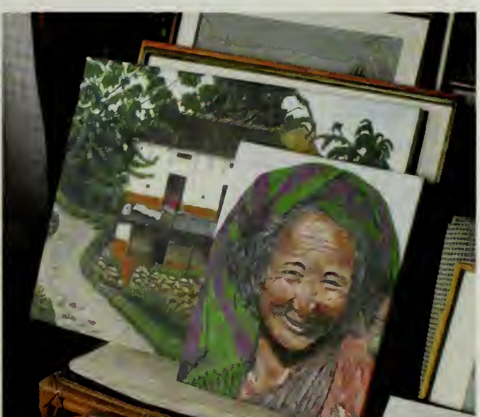
In Nepal for 48 years, Krantz began painting five years ago.

Miriam E. Krantz, a well-known nutritionist and Mennonite Mission Network associate, was recognized for her artwork recently in several of Nepal's newspapers. Krantz, now a student at the Kathmandu University Centre for Art and Design, showcased a solo art exhibit from May 24-June 5 titled "Nepal Appreciation"

A feature article in *The Kathmandu Post* praised the exhibit for capturing rural life in Nepal. Articles also appeared in *The Himalayan Times* and *The Reporter*. About 250 people saw the exhibit of 38 works, of which 15 were sold, according to Krantz.

"The interest was way beyond my expectations in regard to attendance and words of encouragement (spoken and written) by my friends and acquaintances, as well as by artists and art teachers and their students and by those who simply dropped in," Krantz wrote via email.

"Although many of my friends knew that I was attending art campus, most did not know what kind of art and to what extent I was committed to painting. Many were very surprised," she wrote.



Mennonite Mission Network

Krantz has lived and worked in Nepal for more than 48 years, promoting and teaching nutrition, but has been studying art for only five years.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

The debate about U.S. immigration policy

Steven Nolt: Sometimes it is a mix of half-truths and selective memory.

In 1883, Emma Lazarus, an Ashkenazi Jew living in New York City, wrote a sonnet in which she cast the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of welcome to "huddled masses" of immigrants "yearning to breathe free." New York's civic leaders and cultural elite dismissed the poem, pointing out—correctly—that the French sculptor had intended the statue to represent ideas emanating from America, not people coming to America.

Then, in the 1940s, with immigration all but halted by the Second World War, a Yugoslavian-American journalist launched a movement to reconnect the forgotten poem and the statue. Through a letter-writing campaign and with the help of a popular postage stamp, the Statue of Liberty came to be redefined as a symbol of "worldwide welcome" with the words, "Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me."

Today it is hard to image that the Statue of Liberty was not always associated with immigration. Yet that link is a relatively recent one.

Like the commonplace assumptions about Lazarus' poem, contemporary discussion of immigration is sometimes clouded by a mix of half-truths and selective memory. There are a host of biblical, moral, economic and legal factors that play into a careful consideration of immigration policy. What follows is a bit of historical perspective that may also contribute to thoughtful Christian reflection.

Immigration is a complex, global phenomenon that involves a variety of push factors that force or encourage people to leave particular places, pull factors that draw them to other places, and means that channel or impede movement from one place to another.

Today the term "immigrant" often connotes a person who voluntarily leaves one country and follows an ordered process of moving to another. Historically, immigration has been much less tidy.

In the first place, immigration has often been involuntary. Between 1607 and 1775, almost three-quarters of the people who came to what, after 1776, became the United States, were coerced. Many were enslaved Africans, but others were English convicts serving life sentences of hard labor, and many others were indentured servants who had sold themselves in a desperate attempt to escape debtor prison. Although voluntary immigration became the norm after about 1820, many newcomers still arrive in the United States today through no direct choice of their own.

Then, too, immigration is usually defined in terms of people crossing borders, but borders have also crossed people. In 1848, some 75,000 people went to bed one night in Mexico and woke up the next morning in the United States after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo abruptly incorporated the northern third of Mexico into its northern neighbor. Congress then debated what to do with those who had involuntarily "moved" into the United States. After much handwringing over whether the country should absorb so many Roman Catholics, Congress declared Mexicans legally white and granted them citizenship.

Big picture patterns: Although Argentina, Brazil and Canada have received more immigrants as a percentage of their populations, more people from more different places have come to the United States than to anywhere else in the world. Throughout U.S. history, immigration has been a significant demographic factor, with the exception of a brief period from 1930 to 1970, when immigration was relatively slight. This exceptional time was the result of laws that limited European immigration and banned virtually all newcomers from Asia—as well as the impacts of the Great Depression, World War II and the Cold War—all of which hindered people's ability to move as freely as they once had.

For much of American history, 12 to 14 percent of the country's population was foreign-born, and they were disproportionately young. After about 1930, immigrants shrank as a share of the population. By 1970, immigrants were only 4.7 percent

A word on terminology

Scholars generally use the term "unauthorized immigrant" rather than "illegal immigrant" or "undocumented immigrant." The term illegal immigrant is problematic, both because its use in public discussions rarely matches its technical meaning and because of its pejorative connotations. The term easily becomes a noun, as in, "He's an illegal." Yet a human being cannot be illegal, and to construe one's identity in that way is wrong. The term undocumented immigrant is also problematic. As legal scholar Mae Ngai points out, "undocumented" is a historically specific condition that is possible only when documents ... are required for lawful admission." Furthermore, "not all illegal aliens are illegal because they lack documents; there are other types of unlawful presence and other grounds for deportation." —*Steven Nolt*

of the population, an all-time low (see table on page 46). Moreover, the foreign-born in 1970 were disproportionately older people who were not enrolled in school or active in the workforce.

Thereafter, for a number of reasons, immigration returned to historically normal levels, and today the foreign-born percentage of the population (authorized and unauthorized immigrants) is once again about 13 percent. Yet the unusual years around 1970 continue to cast a long shadow because they shaped the outlook and assumptions of many of today's public policy makers.

Those who came of age around 1970—a generation that includes most of today's influential political figures—spent their formative years in an America that included few immigrants, and even fewer who were classmates or coworkers. For those who attended high school or entered the work world in the late 1960s and early 1970s, today's society, in which more than one-in-10 people was born abroad, could hardly be starker. When anxious policy makers say there are an unprecedented number of immigrants today, they are correct—within the frame of their life experience. Considered within a longer timeframe, however, today's numbers are typical.

In 1848, some 75,000 people went to bed one night in Mexico and woke up the next morning in the United States after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo abruptly incorporated the northern third of Mexico into its northern neighbor.

Then and now, similarities and differences: Comparing long-term patterns reveals both similarities and differences between immigrants in the early 1900s and early 2000s.

1. Origins. Before 1930, about 85 percent of immigrants came from Europe. Today, three-quarters hale from Latin America and Asia. The largest cohorts come from Mexico, India, China, Philippines and Vietnam. Recent studies by the Pew Research Centers show that Asians are the fastest-growing immigrant group.

2. Age and family profile. In the past, immigrants were disproportionately single, young adult men. Today, immigrants remain younger than the U.S. population as a whole, but sex ratios are more balanced, and women comprise a slight majority from some sending countries.

3. Remigration and remittances. Before 1930, somewhere between a third and half of all immigrants did not remain permanently in the United States. Immigration was often an economic strategy to earn money here and then return to Europe with savings. Along the way, European immigrants also sent large amounts of money to extended family back home. Remittances are still common today. So is the phenomenon of remigration. For example, since 2006, emigration from the United States to Mexico has been on the rise (mostly by choice, but some as a result of deportation or coercion). As a result, today net migration from Mexico is zero.

4. Education. Before 1930 virtually all immigrants arrived with less formal education than the general U.S. population. Today, about half of all immigrants arrive more highly educated than the average native-born American.

5. Socially. Then as now, the most recent newcomers faced resistance and resentment from other Americans. There were important variations in racial discrimination, to be sure—immigrants from Mexico, for example, often were made to shower before being allowed across the border, while French Canadians were not—but broadly speaking, anti-immigrant sentiments and stereotypes directed against today's arrivals sound much like those placed on the Irish in the 1840s, the Chinese in the 1870s or the Italians in the 1910s.

Will today's immigrants be integrated into the American mainstream as their predecessors were? History suggests they eventually will, although the path of acceptance and adjustment may be more arduous—not because today's immigrants are so different but because of economic and structural differences in today's society. During the 1940s, for example, the giant affirmative action program that was the G.I. Bill propelled millions of second-generation Southern and Eastern European Americans into the ranks of the middle class with college scholarships and small business loans. No public programs of that scale seem to be in the offing.

Origins of restriction. The U.S. Constitution drafted in 1787 included almost nothing concerning voluntary immigration, although it seems the Founders assumed that voluntary immigration should be encouraged. At the time, Western nations regarded people as a country's most valuable resource, and governments often tried to stop residents from emigrating but not from immigrating. In the United States before 1882, it was not possible to be an "illegal" immigrant because immigration was not restricted by law.

That began to change in 1882, when Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. The CEA all but banned immigration from China and launched a slow process of prescribing who could move to this country.

Immigration restriction soon excluded all Asians and many Europeans. Restrictionism reflected the assumptions of social Darwinism, which held that most humans were unable to be or become good Americans either because they were genetically inferior or because their cultural dispositions allowed them to be exploited and thereby lower the standard of living for everyone else.

With voluntary immigration now limited for the first time, the country suddenly faced the possibility of unauthorized entry. Testimony to the fact that illegal immigration was a new concept is the bafflement of judges who considered whether the United States even possessed the constitutional authority to deport someone. In 1893, a divided Supreme Court decided that deportation was the logical corollary of the CEA. But the court also ruled that deportation must be a civil proceeding, not a criminal one—as it remains today. A new agency, the Border Patrol, began trying to stop unauthorized entry, particularly of Asians who traveled to Canada and then paid smugglers huge amounts to ferry them across the border. Notorious human smuggling rings operating on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario took Chinese immigrants on dangerously unsafe boats that tried to evade the new Border Patrol.

Remarkably, restrictive legislation did not place any numeric caps on immigration from the Western Hemisphere, and patterns of periodic and even seasonal migration across the border with Mexico continued and deepened. In fact, Mexican workers became increasingly important to the U.S. economy as restriction curtailed the number of European and Asian laborers. Between 1942 and 1964, a guest worker program known as the bracero program further encouraged immigration from Mexico.

Immigration is a complex public policy issue. But it is one that does not have to leave us only with the options of open borders, on one hand, or a police state on the other.

Contemporary framework: In 1965, Congress passed the Hart-Celler Act, which established the basic framework for immigration policy, with which we still live. Hart-Celler opened up immigration from Asia but placed immigration from the Western Hemisphere under quota limitations for the first time.

Because Baby Boomers were beginning to graduate from high school in large numbers in 1965, legislators believed America would not need immigrants to fill the country's labor needs, so immigration priorities were established in ways that deemphasized employment-based visas. Despite some important modifications and amendments since 1965, employment visas remain a relatively small slice of annual visa allotments.

Economists and business owners have noted that the supply of employment-based visas rarely matches current labor demand. Although there is virtually no waiting for professional athletes, those holding doctoral degrees or would-be immigrants with assets of $1 million or more, the situation for ordinary workers and their prospective U.S. employers is daunting. As of July, visas for such potential employees were being allotted to those who had applied in 2006. To put it another way, a prospective immigrant or an employer who wished to hire a laborer from abroad through authorized channels would need to begin a process today in anticipation of a job opening in 2018. Few employers know their workforce needs that far in advance. Remarkably, as command economies have fallen in the Soviet Union and have been radically modified in China, U.S. immigration policy continues to define a national labor supply in the abstract and years in advance, and politicians express surprise when market forces fill the resulting labor gap with unauthorized workers.

Immigration is a complex public policy issue. But it is one that does not have to leave us only with the options of open borders, on the one hand, or a police state on the other.

Since 1990, most immigration-related legislation, along with billions and billions of dollars, has focused on tightening borders rather than modifying visa allotments or attending to the larger push and pull factors—many of them economic—that propel immigration. Unfortunately, a subject so important to so many people has received too little creative thought and attention.

May the church be at the forefront of calling on the creativity of all people as we together live with the old-yet-new gift of immigration and seek to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Steven M. Nolt is a professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College and teaches immigration and ethnic history. This article is adapted from the Goshen Community Relations Commission forum on immigration, June 23, 2011.

Foreign-born as percent of U.S. population

1860	13.2
1870	14.0
1880	13.3
1890	14.7
1900	13.6
1910	14.7
1920	13.2
1930	11.6
1970	**4.7**
2000	11.1
2010	12.9

Source: U.S. Census

WORKERS

Dean, Charles, was licensed as deacon for The Way Thru Christ Community Fellowship, Chester, Pa., on June 10.

Diller, Lester, was installed as interim lead pastor of Buffalo Mennonite Church, Lewisburg, Pa., on June 1.

Eberly, Matthew, was installed as associate pastor of Shiloh Mennonite Church, Reading, Pa., on Feb. 5.

Horning, Philip, was ordained as lead pastor of Gehman Mennonite Church, Adamson, Pa., on May 13.

Kreider, Barry, was ordained as pastor of Pilgrims Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa., on April 22.

Scholtz, Todd, was ordained as pastor of Wilkens Avenue Mennonite Church, Baltimore, Md., on May 6.

Smith, Oliver III, was licensed as deacon for The Way Thru Christ Community Fellowship, Chester, Pa., on June 10.

OBITUARIES

Bitikofer, Luella Mae Zook, 91, Hesston, Kan., died May 19. Spouse: Henry Bitikofer. Parents: Edward and Nancy Hershberger Zook. Children: LaVera Ollek, Evelyn Zook, Melva Janke, Anita Schimmel, Linda Miles; six grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 23 at Schowalter Villa Chapel, Hesston.

Byler, Verda E. Fisher, 99, Honey Brook, Pa., died May 23, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Marcus E. Byler (deceased). Parents: Stephen and Barbara Lavina Hooley Fisher. Children: James, John David, Robert, M. Elvin; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: May 26 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Enns, George, 86, Altona, Manitoba, died June 19. Spouse: Betty Enns (deceased). Parents: Isaac K. and Agatha Peters Enns. Children: Sheila Scott, Lisa Scott; two grandchildren. Funeral: June 24 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona

Gault, Patricia J. Joslyn, 67, Dalton, Ohio, died April 2, of cancer. Spouse: Danny Gault. Parents: Donald and Vera Galvin Joslyn. Children: Sharon Odom, Kelly Boyajian, Brian Norton, Janelle Sprague; seven grandchildren. Funeral: April 5 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Gochnauer, John B., 95, Mount Joy, Pa., died June 1. Spouse: Anna Myrtle Bowers Gochnauer. Parents: Adam H. and Myrtle E. Bair Gochnauer. Children: Donald, Anna Mary Knier, John R., David E.; 12 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 5 at Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa.

Gross, Adella M. Kleinsasser, 89, Freeman, S.D., died June 8. Spouse: Erwin R. Gross (deceased). Spouse: Ernest F. Walter (deceased). Parents: Joe K. and Julie Schrag Kleinsasser. Children: Vera Heiman, LaVern, Errol, Derrick; 12 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Step-children: Don Gross, Harley Gross. Funeral: June 12 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Hershberger, Norma Jean Sommers, 86, Walnut Creek, Ohio, died May 15. Spouse: Howard Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Ora Sommers. Children: Cheryl Yoder, Marsha Snyder, Bonnie Mellor, Ronald; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 18 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church.

Hooley, Eldon "Ray," 80, Canby, Ore., died March 29. Spouse: Barbara Hooley. Parents: Alvin and Elsie Hooley. Children: Mike, Doug, Sally Burge; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Private burial at Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, Ore.

Hunsberger, Willard Detweiler, 85, Goshen, Ind., died May 16. Spouse: Pauline Farquhar Hunsberger (deceased). Spouse: Virginia Oberly Hunsberger (deceased). Parents: Earl Heacock Hunsberger and Estella Detweiler Hunsberger. Children: Patrice, Terry. Funeral: May 25 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Keidel, Levi O., 85, Leo, Ind., died April 24. Spouse: Eudene Kine Keidel (deceased). Parents: Levi and Anne Keidel. Children: Paul, Pricilla Miller Perry, Ruth Keidel Clemens; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 16 at Westview Alliance Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Keller, Mary L., 76, Souderton, Pa., died June 3. Parents: Marvin S. and Fannie F. Landis Keller. Funeral: June 7 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Koller, Dennis Eugene, 77, Freeman, S.D., died May 28. Spouse: Berneda Poppe Koller. Parents: John Koller, Sr., and Maxine Koller. Children: Kim Reed, Kerry Koller, Kecia Christensen; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 2 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Kool, Rebekah Smith, 30, Orange, Va., died April 18. Spouse: Harm Kool. Parents: Les and Betsy Crockett Smith. Funeral: April 28 in Orange, Va.

Loewen, Elizabeth Elrose Penner, 93, Mountain Lake, Minn., died June 6. Spouse: Peter N. Loewen (deceased). Parents: Bernhard D. and Maria M. Harder Penner. Children: David Peter, LaDonna Marie Stout, Loretta Jane Gorman, Marjorie Elaine Rasmussen; 14 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 11 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Miller, Earl J., 88, Rathdrum, Idaho, died May 19. Spouse: Jean C. Hagey Miller (deceased). Parents: John and Lena Hauder Miller. Children: Terry Lee Miller, Pamela Yothers; one grandchild; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 12 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Miller, Mary Louise Yoder, 77, Goshen, Ind., died April 8. Spouse: Ray L. Miller (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Julia Yoder Peachey. Children: Nancy Damm, Jeffrey S.; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 12 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Miller, Melvin "Mel" P., 79, Sarasota, Fla., died June 22, of cancer. Spouse: Lavina Herschberger Miller. Parents: Peter J. and Elizabeth Miller. Children: Myra Lengacher, Richard, Chip; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 30 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Middlebury, Ind.

Moyer, George S., 94, Sellersville, Pa., died May 15. Spouse: Naomi Alderfer Moyer (deceased). Parents: Henry Warren and Ida Smith Moyer. Children: Cleon, Donald, Warren, G. Alan, Susan Frederick; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 19 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Mullet, Mary Evelyn Brenneman Hostetler, 99, Sarasota, Fla., died June 5. Spouse: Lloyd N. Hostetler (deceased). Spouse: Henry L. Mullet (deceased). Parents: Simeon and Lillie Burkholder Brenneman. Children: Marilyn Eigsti, Jean Paschen, William Lloyd; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 10 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Nafziger, Maxine W. Widrick, 79, Lowville, N.Y., died June 23. Spouse: Vernon Nafziger (deceased). Parents: Leon and Katherine Lehman Widrick. Children: Stephen, Lori Snyder; nine grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 28 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

Peachey, Gwendolyn Wenger, 78, Lititz, Pa., died April 23 of brain tumor complications. Spouse: Urbane Peachey. Parents: Irvin and Alice Indergaard Wenger. Children: Michael, Kirsten Peachey, Charles; seven grandchildren. Funeral: April 29 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Pellman, Richard L., 90, Lititz, Pa., died May 29. Spouse: Betty Neff Pellman. Parents: LeRoy S. and Elizabeth Lauver Pellman. Children: Phyllis Good, Kenneth; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 2 at West Bethany Chapel, Landis Homes, Lititz.

Rogers, Ruth Ann Springer, 74, Denver, Colo., died June 13, of cancer. Spouse: Richard Rogers. Funeral: June 16 at First Mennonite Church, Denver.

Rose, Dr. Earl Forrest, 85, Iowa City, Iowa, died May 1, from complications of Parkinson disease. Spouse: Marilyn Preheim Rose. Parents: Forest and Lena Berhuis Rose. Children: Elise Rose, Cecile Rose, Karen Rose, Miriam Rose, Forrest; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: June 11 at First Mennonite Church of Iowa City.

Rush, Kathryn Erb Rice, 83, Souderton, Pa., died June 6. Spouse: Howard Wismer Rush (deceased). Parents: Mahlon and Maggie Erb Rice. Children: Sharon R. Owens, Eunice Rush-Day, Michael, Stephen, Philip; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: June 9 at Deep Run Mennonite Church East, Perkasie, Pa.

Sauder, Delmar Jay, 81, Archbold, Ohio, died May 18, of a heart-related illness. Spouse: Evelyn Lee Sauder (deceased). Parents: Erie and Leona Sauder. Funeral: May 22 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Schantz, C. Kathryn Yoder, 95, Goshen, Ind., died May 23. Spouse: Stanley Shantz (deceased). Parents: Elmer L. and Bertha F. Yoder Yoder. Step-children: Calvin, Nelson, Elinor Gingerich, Melvin; nine grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 9 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Slaubaugh, Janette Carolyn, 86, Kalona, Iowa, died June 6. Parents: Lewis and Myrtle Bender Slaubaugh. Funeral: June 11 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Smith, Dale W., 83, Wichita, Kan., died June 15. Spouse: Justine Peters Smith. Parents: Donovan W. and Elfreda Daggert Smith. Children: Colleen Smith, Debra Davis, Candace Day, Angela Smith, Rebecca Smith; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 23 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

Stauffer, Anna Mae Stutzman, 87, Seward, Neb., died May 30. Spouse: Leonard Stauffer (deceased). Parents: John and Della Roth Stutzman. Children: Garry, Dennis, Herschel, JoAnn Roth, JoDean Stauffer; 10 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 2 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford, Neb.

Sweigart, Melvin Glenn, 90, New Holland, Pa., died June 10. Spouse: Gladys A. Stoltzfus Sweigart. Parents: Samuel Good Sweigart and Anna Shirk Garman Sweigart. Children: Philip G., Dirk M., Rebecca K. Boyer, Jon M.; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 14 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Walter, Theodore "Ted" Robert, 83, Penticton, British Columbia, died June 15. Spouse: Arlene Peifer Witmer Walter. Parents: Allen Sampey Walter and Lizzie Kulp Nyce Walter. Children: Michael, Philip, Tony, Celena Titterington; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 22 at Grace Mennonite Church, Penticton.

Weaver, Naomi Mae Naffziger, 89, Hesston, Kan., died May 25. Spouse: Albert Weaver, Jr. Parents: Christian Lee and Ida Elizabeth Naffziger. Children: Kathleen Ruth, Stanley; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 16 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston.

Weidman, Dallas P., 78, Manheim, Pa., died May 30. Spouse: Mary Mowery Weidman (deceased). Parents: Dallas P. and Della Haubert Weidman. Children: Randy Boll, Rick Weidman, Dallas Weidman, Carol Smith, Linda Blauch; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 4 at Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa.

Yoder, Barbara Roth Weldy, 79, Goshen, Ind., died June 3. Spouse: Richard Yoder. Spouse: Loren Weldy (deceased). Parents: John and Alma Yoder Roth. Children: Alan, Stanley; step-daughters: Sanna Yoder Walters, Lisa Caskey; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: June 23 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Yoder, V. Ray, was born July 23, 1920, and died May 21, 2012. Ray was born in Minot, N.D. to Ira Levi Yoder and Minnie Pearl Brubaker Yoder, and moved to Clarence Center, N.Y. at an early age. He married Mary Anna Weber on June 19, 1948. Surviving with his wife Mary are his children: Kathryn Yoder (Gary) Ernest, Akron, N.Y.; James (Linda Bertsche) Yoder, Haiti with two adult children, Rachael Yoder (Matt) Jarvis, W.Va. and Tim Yoder, Goshen; John (Joanne Good) Yoder with one son, Daniel, Wheaton, Ill.; and siblings: Miriam Jantzi, Glendale, Ariz. and Merle Yoder, Flagstaff, Ariz. Ray was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Leroy Yoder. Ray worked as a carpenter/contractor all his life and owned his own business, Ray-Mar Construction for many years. He had a passion for woodworking, making many projects out of his well appointed wood shop. Ray and Mary were involved for many years with International Students Incorporated, developing long lasting relationships with individuals, couples, and families from many countries around the world. They were active members of Clarence Center/Akron Mennonite Church for more than 60 years. In retirement, Ray and Mary shared time between Akron, N.Y. and Sunnybreeze Retirement Community in Arcadia, Fla., until 2003 when they moved to Greencroft Retirement Community in Goshen. Ray was a member of Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, 909 N 6th St, Goshen, where a memorial service was held on May 26.

Zehr, Kathleen LaJune, 94, Lowville, N.Y., died May 15. Parents: Benjamin Franklin and Susianna Lehman Zehr. Funeral: May 22 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

Zuercher, Warren H., 80, Grand View, Idaho, died May 4. Spouse: Pansy Zuercher. Parents: Elliott H. and Edna I. Zuercher. Siblings: Delma Brenneman, Shirley Cannon, Katheryn Brubaker, William. Funeral: June 8, Knight Community Church, Grand View, Idaho.

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RESOURCES

Learning from My Father: Lessons on Life and Faith by David Lawther Johnson (Eerdmans, 2012, $15) captures the poignant relationship between a father and a son with writing that is nuanced, compelling and readable. This memoir is honest and full of down-to-earth wisdom.

The Spirit in Creation and New Creation, edited by Michael Welker (Eerdmans, 2012, $32), gathers 15 scholars—experts in physics, biology, mathematics, psychology, sociology and theology—to ponder how the Spirit relates to the world in which we live and to the world to come. The contributors come from a variety of countries and faith traditions, from Russian and Greek Orthodox to Roman Catholic to Pentecostal.

The Devil and Pierre Gernet: Stories by David Bentley Hart (Eerdmans, 2012, $25) collects four short stories and one novella. Hart writes that "God is no more likely (and probably a good deal less likely) to be found in theology than in poetry and fiction."

Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities by Benjamin T. Conner (Eerdmans, 2012, $16) argues that while nearly 20 percent of children have developmental disabilities, too often they are marginalized within churches. This book challenges congregations to adopt a new, practice-centered approach to congregational ministry—one that includes and amplifies the witness of adolescents with developmental disabilities.

Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture by R. Paul Stevens (Eerdmans, 2012, $16) revisits and takes apart more than 20 biblical accounts—from Genesis to Revelation—exploring through them the theological meaning of every sort of work, manual or intellectual, domestic or commercial.

America and Its Guns: A Theological Expose by James E. Atwood (Cascade Books, 2012, $27) contends that the 30,000 gun deaths our country suffers every year cannot be understood as a political issue but a spiritual one. Atwood, an avid hunter, cautions that an absolute trust in guns and violence morphs easily into idolatry.

Relentless Goodbye: Grief and Love in the Shadow of Dementia by Ginnie Horst Burkholder (Herald Press, 2012, $16.99) shares from the heart about caring for a spouse who is slowly slipping away to Lewy body dementia. Burkholder's memoir reveals how she handles the constant challenges through humor, love, commitment and faith but does not gloss over the loss, pain and loneliness on this emotional roller coaster ride.

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Amish Mennonite Heritage Center of Berlin, Ohio, is looking for an ***executive director***. Duties include general administration, fund-raising skills, public relations skills. Knowledge in Anabaptist history and literature is important. Send resumes to Amish and Mennonite Heritage Center, P.O. Box 324, Berlin, OH 44610, attn: Director Search Committee; email amhcdirsearch@myomnicity.com or call Dennis Hostetler 330-231-1088.

Mount Joy Mennonite Church seeks ***associate pastor for youth ministry*** (half-time) and ***director of children's ministries*** (40 percent time). A combined, full-time position is possible, depending on gifting and passion. To apply or request position descriptions, contact Karl Landis, lead pastor, karllandis@mjmc.org; 717-653-5660.

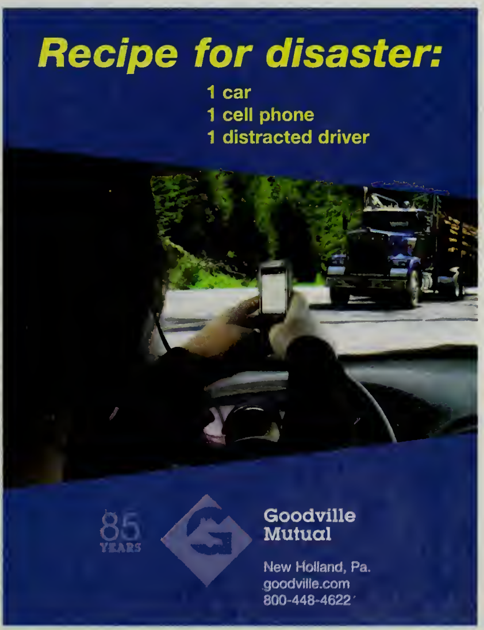
Eastern Mennonite University is seeking applicants for a ***assistant director of communications*** position for the Washington Community Scholars' Center (WCSC). Excellent verbal and written communication skills required. Experience with recruitment, college student relations, urban culture and working with social media preferred. Responsibilities include recruitment of students, represent the WCSC program in the broader D.C. community, serve as a liaison between EMU and the WCSC program and direct program publicity. The position works closely with the director in long-range planning processes and leadership programming. Position located in Washington D.C. Projected start date of Aug. 15, 2012. Submit application, resume and three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

First Mennonite Church of Indianapolis seeks a ***full-time associate pastor***. As a thriving congregation with attendance of 200, that emphasizes peacemaking, world citizenship and service to others, we desire an individual who is strongly committed to Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and practice. Women and people of color are encouraged to apply. For information, please contact Paul Hartman (Search Committee Chair) atpaulhartman@sbcglobal.net.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

Assembly Mennonite Church, a congregation in Goshen, Ind., that is part of both Indiana-Michigan and Central District conferences, seeks a ***pastor*** (.50-.65 FTE) to serve with two other pastors in a team ministry. The person filling this role will work as part of a three-member pastoral team. Desired qualifications include interpersonal skills for nurturing children and young adults, overseeing Christian education, as well as the ability to coordinate administrative tasks for the congregation. Other expected duties include preaching and leading worship up to nine times yearly and helping make connections with the larger church. Term of service is three years at .5 to .65 FTE (110-140 hours per month). Mennonite Church USA denominational guidelines for pastoral salaries and benefits will be followed. Other qualifications include: seminary degree (or seminary degree work in process); administrative experience; experience in congregational leadership; ability/commitment to enable others in congregational tasks; team leadership experience; and affirmation of Assembly's covenant and practices. Interested candidates may contact the chair of the search committee at maryyoderholsopple@gmail.com or 574-875-6831.

Mennonite Central Committee seeks ***service workers*** for the MCC U.S. Office in Akron, Pa. Service workers receive full support and stipend. Positions open include receptionist, IT technician, records and library assistant, and administrative assistant. For more information, contact Emily Stednick at eas@mcc.org or call 559-301-3403, or visit mcc.org/serve.



The belief barrier

Sharon Kniss will start a master's program this fall in International Peace Studies from the Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame.

When I lived in London, I picked up a Grove Booklet (a publication series on contemporary religious ideas) on "Taking Ordinary Theology Seriously" by Jeff Astley and Ann Christie. I was astonished to discover that many regular church attenders do not believe in traditional Christian beliefs. From the in-depth study of 45 Anglicans in North Yorkshire, which led to the booklet's publication, only 20 percent of those interviewed believed Jesus was fully God and fully divine, and only 13 percent believed in the substitution theory of atonement. Those interviewed were not a fringe of the church—though they were not in ministerial leadership, they were regular, active churchgoers.

By registering my surprise at reading about the "ordinary theology" of these average Anglican church attenders, I realized I had been assuming that church was a place for believers and that those believers were in agreement on their faith, as promulgated by the pastor in sermons. I noticed a clear disconnect between what I subconsciously believed from experience and what I articulated theologically. Even though I articulated that all people were welcome in church, regardless of their place of their spiritual journey, I still felt that everyone in church largely agreed with what was being said from the pulpit (hence why there's such a variety of churches).

During a hiatus in church attendance, I spoke with a friend about my decision not to attend church. I explained that it felt false to be participating in church, that everyone else would think I believed something I didn't. I also left out of a sense of integrity, since there seemed rarely an opportunity for an honest discussion of beliefs. I explained to my friend that I'd probably attend church again one day, but it would happen only when I felt I could sign on to the full package.

My friend encouraged me to go to church anyway. If church was only a place for those who had all the answers, she said, what would be the point? I slowly learned there were small but significant numbers of people who were part of Mennonite institutions and leadership who didn't necessarily sign on to traditional Christian orthodoxy or agree with everything in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Even though these people didn't believe everything that was suggested to be established truth, they felt a firm calling to their denomination or ministry.

After my hiatus, I began attending a congregation that openly welcomed a variety of beliefs from its congregants. It was refreshing to be part of a congregation where I didn't have to worry about fully agreeing with what was said from the front, and where open discussion of beliefs was a welcome part of the life of the congregation.

> Being a part of a church doesn't mean 'you've arrived' or solved all your questions about God, Jesus and how to live in the world.

I'm just now catching on to something fundamental about church life. Being a part of a church doesn't mean "you've arrived" or solved all your questions about God, Jesus and how to live in the world. It just means you go to church. For each person, the reason is different—feeling a part of something greater, social connections, ritual, nourishment and challenge, opportunity to worship, opportunity to proclaim and renew belief. Of course, some people have deeply held Christian convictions and don't go to church at all (but that's a discussion for another time).

Once we've been baptized and proclaim belief, do we stop having questions? No, we've just promised to attempt this journey to the best of our abilities and search for meaning and faith led by Jesus.

I felt discouraged when I realized I had the assumption that you had to believe in order to go to church. How constricting it must feel if you have to sign an internal creed in order to participate in church life! What about those days when all you have are questions? What about those days when you're truly not sure what you believe?

How can we structure church life, and daily life, in a way that welcomes all of us—recognizing that none of us will ever have all the answers and that we're all merely trying to journey forward? How can we have more honest conversations about our beliefs and questions in a way that welcomes rather than constricts or disenfranchises? TM

FILM REVIEWS

Moonrise Kingdom (PG-13) is a sweet, funny film about two 12-year-olds who fall in love and run away on an island off New England in 1965. Various factions of the town mobilize to search for them, and the town is turned upside down. Director Wes Anderson has crafted another of his fables, but he includes telling if eccentric detail and shows respect for all his characters. —*Gordon Houser*

Brave (PG) is the first Pixar movie to feature a female character. Merida, an aspiring archer and impetuous daughter of Scottish royalty, makes a reckless choice that unleashes unintended peril. The film focuses on the mother-daughter relationship and includes humor and drama.—*gh*

DVD REVIEW

The Sunset Limited (NR) is based on a play by Cormac McCarthy. Two men, Black (Samuel L. Jackson) and White (Tommy Lee Jones), spend 90 minutes in an apartment talking about God and belief. Black has just rescued White from suicide and wants to convince him to choose life. Though McCarthy often portrays bleakness, he represents belief well.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

God and Charles Dickens: Recovering the Christian Voice of a Classic Author by Gary L. Colledge (Brazos Press, 2012, $19.99) argues that Dickens was "a novelist who possessed deep and passionate Christian beliefs and who wrote from a thoroughgoing Christian worldview." Furthermore, for Dickens, "Christianity was about imitating Jesus in the concrete realities of everyday life.—*gh*

Journey to the Heart: Christian Contemplation Through the Centuries, edited by Kim Nataraja (Orbis Bools, 2012, $35), is an illustrated guide to this rich tradition that goes back to Jesus himself. This excellent tool provides not only much information but inspiration in its 30 chapters by various authors.—*gh*

Using apps to change our behavior

Back when I was a student at Wichita (Kan.) State University in the mid-1970s, students (and faculty) from the philosophy department used to debate students (and faculty) from the psychology department at the student union about free will vs. determinism. Most of the psychology faculty members were Skinnerians or determinists. That is, they followed the teachings of B.F. Skinner, a proponent of a theory of behavior modification that seemed to imply that humans had no free will. The philosophy department members opposed this approach.

That all seems so long ago. But then I read the cover article in the June issue of *The Atlantic*, "The Perfected Self" by David H. Freedman. He argues that Skinner's ideas are making a comeback, thanks to smartphone apps that help people become perfected versions of themselves. He tells stories of people who have lost weight by following a Skinnerian formula, which goes something like this: "set modest goals, rigorously track food intake and weight, obtain counseling or coaching, turn to fellow participants for support, transition to less-calorie-dense foods, and move your body more often, any way you like."

Freedman shows how Skinner's principles underlie many weight-loss programs and smartphone apps that may eventually individualize programs to the extent that they take into account "lifestyle and environmental factors like types of job, whom you live with, how busy you are, what ethnic group you belong to and what kind of activity or type of food and drinks you like." As one researcher says could happen: "You put sensors in phones and throughout the home, you develop algorithms that can infer what people are doing, and then you provide tailored automatic feedback that reinforces the right behaviors."

One thing that drives such research is not just individual marketing but the effects it can have on health-care costs. For example, "If mobile apps could reduce obesity and its associated costs by just 5 percent, the savings would amount to about $15 billion a year in the U.S. alone."

Such use of Skinnerian tools applies to other fields as well. A manager at the U.S. Department of Transportation mentioned that it was testing an app "that provides local travelers with various transportation options for specific trips and could gently reinforce decisions to use public transit by pointing out the extra calories commuters would burn by walking to the station and the carbon they'd avoid emitting by leaving their cars at home."

This use of these tools raises such questions as this: "Should we be wary of utilities that try to shift our energy use or health insurers that try to change our diets?" If the effects are good, such as reducing obesity, we may think, Sure. But who decides what are good uses and what are bad?

Freedman points out the irony of Skinner's theory: "To control our behavior, we must accept a fundamental lack of control, acknowledging that our environment ultimately holds the reins." He argues here that most of us can't go against our environment in the long run, but "we can purposefully alter our environment to shape our behavior in ways we choose."

These are large questions. We go through our days being affected by many things in our environment that we ignore or are unaware of. Perhaps this article can serve to alert us to this fact and challenge us to find ways to change what is affecting us.

And I suppose even those of us without smartphones can do this, right?

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

they brought neither honor nor glory to God.

This had to be a painful realization for Eric, but staying in a marriage with building resentment is not a solution either. Every marriage is its own distinctive animal. We look at some and wonder how they possibly work. We look at others and can't figure out why they don't work. Only the two people in that marriage know what the dynamics are. And because of that, it is wise to remember Matthew 7:1: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

I hope Litwiller finds Mennonites close to him who are supportive of his struggle and journey. We are here to help each other along the way and not to be stumbling blocks. I, for one, am thanking God that this brother found his way back home. May God continue to sustain you, Eric.—*Rex Hooley, Goshen, Ind.*

Hydrogen bombs saved lives

Thank you for Ted Grimsrud's reflections on the Good War (July). I vividly remember Aug. 6, 1945, when I as an 8-year-old kid was playing with my dog Rover in our front yard. My mother stuck her head out the kitchen window and screamed at the top of her lungs, "The war is over. They dropped a bomb on Hiroshima."

Exactly 15 years later, during the first week of August 1960, I was visiting Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, as program director for Church World Service. In every village I visited, I had to deal with the moral ambiguity of being taken to the edge of the village by the elders, who showed me the huge ditches dug 15 years previously by the villagers. They had been forced by their Japanese occupiers for this grisly task. The plan was called the "Japanizing of Indonesia." Everybody over the age of 30 was to be shot and buried in those massive ditches.

But when the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanizing of Indonesia was aborted. The Japanese commander called a mass meeting in the central plaza of Poso, announced that the war was over and disappeared, never to be heard of again in Indonesia. His office was searched the next day. Meticulously accurate lists of everyone over the age of 30 were found in his desk. The village elders tearfully thanked me for being an American and representing the country to whom they owed their lives.

I heard similar stories from Sumatra, the Celebes and other areas of Indonesia. Some estimates are that 30 or 40 million people would have been slaughtered in Indonesia if the bombs had not been dropped. As Grimsrud observes, Indonesia had already paid more in lives than the United States, Britain and Japan combined.

I fully agree with Ted when he writes that the use of nuclear weapons "utterly violated the moral criterion of noncombatant immunity." However, even agreement with that principle does not get us off the hook. How do we deal with the high probability of 30 or 40 million more deaths of noncombatants in Indonesia if those bombs had not been dropped?—*Melvin Schmidt, Hyattsville, Md.*

A balance of authority

I really appreciated Everett Thomas' editorial in the July issue. He did a great job representing the reality of our polity.—*Greg Leatherman Sommers, administrator, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference*

Reading the Mennonite Church USA executive committee's response to same-sex unions, I'm gratified that evidently no ministers have performed marriage ceremonies for people who have broken the last part of our Confession of Faith statement on marriage: "The church is called to help couples strengthen their marriage relationship and to encourage reconciliation in times of conflict. The church is also to minister with truth and compassion to persons in difficult family relationships. As the family of God, the church is called to be a sanctuary offering hope and healing for families."—*Nelson Waybill, Harrisonburg Va.*

The cost of spam

I appreciated the news article, "Allegheny Conference Leaders Recommend Reconciliation" when it was first on your website. Several hours after reading it, a comment started forming in my mind, so I went back to the page. I didn't see any comment box. I worked my way back to the January issue and saw why you dropped them —all kinds of "comments" giving links for Oakley sunglasses and Ralph Lauren shoes, etc.

What a bummer! I know that comment sections can be the low-life of the web's written pages. But I register my vote that they have worth, nonetheless. Bless you as you decide how much effort and cost they are worth. —*Harold Miller, Broadway, Va.*

Editor's note: We took down the response boxes when the spam in them reached into the 100s each day and required too many hours of staff time to delete. This is a temporary fix as we research options for the future.

Corrections

We received incomplete and incorrect information about V. Ray Yoder through the MennObits site, and his obituary was incorrect (July). Yoder lived 80 years in Clarence Center, N.Y. and moved to Goshen, Ind., at age 90. He died in Goshen. His three children are Kathryn Yoder Ernest, James and John. Rachel Yoder Jarvis and Tim are two of his three grandchildren. We regret the misinformation. See the extended obituary on page 49.—*Editor*

We misidentified Harold Bauman in our July issue. He did not teach at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary but is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., and a retired pastor and churchwide consultant. —*Editor*

Signposts: A loving community

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.—John 13:35 (TNIV)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.—Colossians 3:12-14 (TNIV)

Most people in the world long to be part of a group where they are loved, accepted and forgiven. I know I do. That's why there is something attractive about genuine Christian community. We know instinctively that such a community is a sign of God's presence and blessing. When followers of Jesus truly love each other, it confirms their status as disciples. Human effort also cannot bring it about.

I suspect that the church didn't always reach the Apostle Paul's highest aspirations for them. If they had, why would he have bothered to give them this instruction? Yet without lofty reminders of our calling, the church may never rise above the communal standards of the surrounding society.

As a Mennonite church, we take Christian community seriously. Several articles in *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* set forth our aspirations for faithful Christian community. Most particularly, Articles 14 and 16 describe how members of the church may best relate to one another. In the same year that we adopted the confession, we also adopted a document called "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love." Both documents describe traits of mutual and loving accountability.

Our church has not given adequate attention to the ways these two documents enable our witness in the world. To the extent that they help us become a more loving and accountable community, they will surely enhance our witness to the presence of the living Christ among us. We bear witness to God's grace as we practice scriptural discernment, cultivate Christ-centered unity and learn to agree and disagree in love. Such actions characterize the faithful church, as noted below:

Missional character trait: People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.

Signpost: Substantial time is spent with one another, building trust and holding ourselves accountable to each other in love.

I observe that many of our congregations struggle to achieve this level of meaningful interaction. The lure of individualism, the busyness of our lives and the stresses of work prevent us from deep engagement with one another in the church. We too seldom take the time to practice mutual accountability, even in the basic form of storytelling. Sharing the stories that have shaped our lives is one of the simplest yet most profound means of "giving an account" of our actions and motives. This is true not only of interactions between individuals but also between congregations who interact with each other.

My friend Don Jacobs once had the occasion to speak in a congregation that called itself the Calvary Independent Church. As part of his message, he commented that "Calvary" and "Independent" really don't fit together in the same name. Since that time, the congregation has dropped "independent" to simply become Calvary Church. Don's friendly admonition to the congregation demonstrates the value of caring counsel and mutuality.

Steven Covey has proposed that a normal and healthy growth pattern of human development shows a movement from dependence to independence to interdependence. Members of healthy missional churches also demonstrate a high degree of mutuality and interdependence. I pray that God's Spirit may bring about a more loving sense of interdependence throughout our church. In this way, we can become the kind of loving community that truly attracts people rather than pushing them away. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

We too seldom take the time to practice mutual accountability, even in the basic form of storytelling.

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FROM THE EDITOR

An unconventional convention

Everett J. Thomas

Mennonite Chuch USA's Phoenix 2013 convention next summer will include an unconventional purpose: to educate participants about immigration issues on the ground, create public witness events in the city and then have those in Phoenix return home to replicate the experiences for those who missed the convention. This is a good plan.

André Gingerich Stoner, one of the Executive Board staff members working on logistics, describes the activities:

"We are ... exploring a wide range of witness opportunities, including a mobile choir and a large prayer walk past points of suffering and hope," Stoner says. "In addition, we want to work with congregations and conferences to plan public witness and prayer vigils at detention centers ... where there are larger concentrations of Mennonites in the weeks immediately after convention. Activities at Phoenix will help prepare for this witness back in our home communities."

Arizona's immigration laws gave leaders pause about even going to Phoenix. After the Executive Board reaffirmed the decision in early 2011, some people declared their intent to stay home to be in solidarity with those who might be profiled. So confronting the central issue, our nation's troubling immigration system, makes sense as a focus for a convention in Phoenix.

We are not going to Phoenix to try to 'fix' Arizona.
—André Gingerich Stoner

Stoner and Iris de León-Hartshorn, director for transformative peacemaking, are clear what the focus is not.

"We are not going to Phoenix to try to 'fix' Arizona," Stoner says. "Arizona can perhaps best be a case study for the assembled Mennonites to learn about what is happening not just there but all around the country in order to help equip us for witness and work in our own communities."

The planners are clear that the intent is to learn from church and immigration groups and support their efforts. But those willing to participate in a public demonstration—called "public witness"—can do more than listen. The options include prayer vigils at detention centers and other buildings that symbolize immigration problems.

"We want to be a Christlike presence of care and compassion for those who are suffering from a broken immigration policy," Stoner says, "of attentiveness to injustice and speaking truth, of respect for those with differing perspectives and building bridges."

The first bridges planners may need to build could be in the delegate assembly. It is unlikely that the hundreds of delegates will all be of one mind when it comes to our country's immigration system. Even more unlikely is agreement about the appropriateness of public demonstrations.

Planners seem to be anticipating those dynamics, however. They are asking conferences to cohost regional education events before the convention. De León-Hartshorn and Mennonite Central Committee staff lead those efforts.

The Mennonite has been asked to help lay the groundwork for such a focus. As a result, we are publishing in this issue a theme section describing the experiences of some immigrants in our churches (beginning on page 20) and an analysis of U.S. immigration laws (page 44).

We encourage our readers to examine these articles carefully and then consider attending the 2013 convention in Phoenix. The more people who experience the event, the more people we will have in our pews to provide accurate and compassionate information about our country's immigration problems.*—ejt*

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Joyce Bontrager Lehman's journey takes her from Kalona to Kabul to the Gates Foundation and beyond.

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September 2012

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- Can someone 'look illegal'?

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TheMennonite September 2012 | Volume 15, Number 9

CONTENTS

12 A life of opportunities —Anna Groff

16 Questions for women leaders

18 A ministry of open arms —Celia Lehman

21 Our mission is the world —Elwood Yoder

24 Blessed are those who question —Anita Hooley Yoder

27 The shared, blackened pot —Jonathan P. Larson

28 An upside to downsizing —Chuck Hosking

32 Congolese Mennonites celebrate 100 years —Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

34 Lanctot encourages Congolese women leaders —June Mears Driedger

35 Geiser remembered at Kidron Church—Sherah-Leigh Gerber

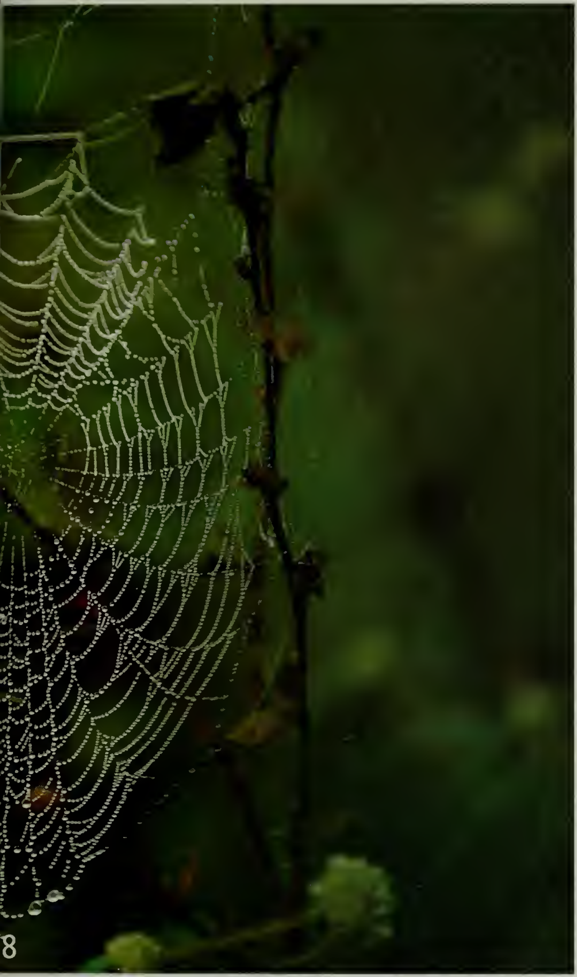
36 12 Scriptures project engages churches—Cindy Snider

37 Dumpsters and peace vigils new way of life —Andrew Clouse

38 Savoring the present—Christine Guth

40 El Centro discovers kindred spirit—Ken Gingerich

44 Serving veterans in VA hospitals—Anna Groff



ON THE COVER: Photo provided

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
47 For the Record
50 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

TheMennonite
September 2012 | Volume 15, Number 9

The Mennonite is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries within Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

POSTMASTER send address corrections to:
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEB SITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue
Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1819
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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Read *God Wins* with *Love Wins*

Re Michael Danner's "Let's Engage *Love Wins* Wisely" (Opinion, July): Like many others, I have read *Love Wins,* in which Rob Bell raises a lot of questions that people ask when considering the Christian faith. We've all had questions of our own.

Job criticized God's justice. Finally God asked Job where he was when the universe was created. That silenced Job. Some questions are answerable, some not. On these God alone knows.

Danner wisely recommends that people read *Love Wins* with one hand, while discussing it with others, and with the other hand use the Scriptures.

An additional book I recommend is *God Wins* by Mark Galli (Tyndale House). In a respectful manner, Galli frequently affirms Bell but also engages the Scriptures, countering many of Bell's views. Galli also invites the Holy Spirit in discernment.

Jesus told his disciples he would send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. Is this not the goal we all seek as we face many of God's mysteries? *—Eugene K. Souder, Grottoes, Va.*

World War II and the Beast

I found Ted Grimsrud's analysis of how World War II moved this country into becoming ever more "beast-like" and war-bent sobering and insightful ("Who Can Stand Against It," July).

Interestingly, the Beast portrayed in Revelation is dependent on the loyal support of two other members of a powerful trinity of evil, the Second Beast, or False Prophet, who has "two horns like a lamb" but who "speaks like a dragon" (the devil) (Revelation 13:11-18), and Babylon, the seductive woman dressed in scarlet who epitomizes an exploitative global economic system (Revelation 17-19). She sits royally astride the First Beast (17:3), a creature that is totally dependent on her ill-gotten gains.

Without an unquestioningly supportive (and false) belief system, such as a patriotic, nationalistic form of civil religion, the First Beast could not maintain its following, and without the wealth of a Babylon-like economic system, it would collapse from lack of wealth to support it.—*Harvey Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Ted Grimsrud's declaration that 40,000 people were killed every day for five years straight during World War II (July) was astonishing, even to those like me, who lived in that time.

I readily agree with Vernard Eller in his observation that "there is nothing quite so futile as an argument about which is a 'good' war" (*King Jesus' Manual of Arms for the Armless*).

I have no reason to question the accuracy of Grimsrud's writing about the so-called "good war" but would like to know more about the sources for these mind-blowing facts.—*Donald D. Kaufman, Newton, Kan.*

Out of Afghanistan now

No matter how you cut it, we lost the war a long time ago. The world's richest and most powerful country fighting one of the poorest countries in the world for 11 years, and we lost the war. Let's get out now.

We lost most of the country to the Taliban. We lost the Afghan government to tyrannical warlords.

Two thousand American soldiers lost their lives there, and thousands more were wounded.

We lost the respect and support of

the Afghan people and turned them into our enemies.

We have spent $500 billion in Afghanistan. We lost that money and with it the means to support the homeless, the unemployed and to educate the uneducated and to build up the infrastructure in our own country.

We have tortured innocent Afghans in prisons in their own country.

We lost our ability to provide any security for the citizens of that country.

Let's get out now and give peace a chance in that country.—*Daniel Riehl, Lititz, Pa.*

More on 'missional'

I agree with almost everything Ron Adams wrote in "Bearing Witness to the Missional God" (June). But I disagree with his main point—that we jettison the word "missional."

Throwing away "missional" is not even an option, for two important reasons. First, it takes us out of the missional conversation circle happening now among mainline Protestants, evangelicals and Catholics throughout North America and Europe. These conversations must include Anabaptists. We have something important to offer and to gain. We did not invent the word and we cannot uninvent it.

Second, just because the word requires definition every time we talk about it does not mean the word is the problem. The same is true of "church" and "kingdom of God." Clarifying definition means we take words seriously.

Adams argues that missional language assumes the church is an equal partner with God and that we err in thinking God's whole project crumbles without the church. That is only problematic if, by church he is referring to the institutional church, the one that is anxiety-ridden about its declining numbers and diminishing cultural influence. If instead we use "church" to refer to the worldwide people of God loyal to the kingdom Jesus proclaimed and demonstrated, then we must say yes. Our missionary God does depend on the church to collaborate with God's saving purposes in the world.

Amen to Adams and all Mennonite Church USA pastors who proclaim that God's agenda has primacy over the agenda of the church as institution. May we fall on our knees before our missional God in humble worship and obedience. May we be energized by this partnership between a missional God and a missional church. And may we recognize our need to clarify and define as we talk together, remaining in this larger conversation that is transforming the way Christian communities inhabit the world today.—*Phil Kniss, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Re "Bearing Witness to Our Missional God" (June): the word missional is of fairly recent origin in our church writings, but the concept has long been in practice. Perhaps it is time for new terminology. Whatever word or phrase you choose, the following article, "A Day Care in Bolivia" by Isaac Shue, well exemplifies the concept.—*Ruth L. Burkholder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Many thanks to C. Norman Kraus, Ruth Anne Abraham and Jim S. Amstutz for their responses to my article calling for replacement of the word "missional" with "bearing witness." I also heard from several others via email. I am glad to know that good folks still read *The Mennonite* and do so carefully and with a theological eye.

I'm less concerned about use of missional than I am about the anxiety besetting our denomination. This anxiety is fed by endless discussions about our

(*Continued on page 54*)

IN THIS ISSUE

Our cover story (page 12) looks at the remarkable life of Joyce Bontrager Lehman, an Amish farm girl who later traveled to various parts of the globe and worked for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* says, "The church calls, trains and appoints gifted men and women to a variety of leadership ministries on its behalf." In this issue (page 16) we begin a series of Q&A's with various women leaders in Mennonite Church USA. This will continue for the next 12 months.

As we prepare for Phoenix 2013, we will address immigration at various times in the coming year. Celia Lehman (page 18) writes about a ministry among Spanish-speaking people in Ohio.

And associate editor Anna Groff in her editorial (page 56) looks at some of the injustices Native Americans in Arizona experience.

Elwood Yoder (page 21) points out how Bible instruction in our Mennonite high schools has changed.

Anita Hooley Yoder (page 24) draws on her experience as a camp pastor to consider the many biblical characters who are affirmed for questioning God.

Chuck Hosking, who attends Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church, is a unique individual who seeks to live faithfully in a world where too few have too much. He offers his insights on page 28, while Andrew Clouse tells about Chuck's influence on a volunteer on page 37.

The Congo Mennonite Church, a sister church of Mennonite Church USA, celebrated its centennial (see page 32) in July.

In our News Analysis (page 44), Anna Groff writes about Mennonites who work in VA hospitals to help bring healing to veterans, even though they oppose warmaking.
—*Associate editor*

The Mennonite receives its largest donation

WHITERIVER, Ariz.—In July, *The Mennonite* received its largest donation on record; it came from an Illinois church that closed in 2009 as a result of declining membership. Bethel Mennonite Church in Pekin, Ill., was a former Central District Conference congregation.

The board of trustees of Bethel Church allocated the remaining funds in the church account to various Mennonite Church USA organizations or agencies with which they felt a connection, according to Jim Sommer, acting secretary for the board of Bethel. *The Mennonite* received $6,995.73.

Sommer said about $70,000 was left in the church account after the attorney's fees and other closing costs were paid. Nine organizations received funds from Bethel. Sommer is president/CEO of Communities of Maple Lawn in Eureka, Ill.

The church property has been transferred to Town and Country Baptist.

Sommer's parents were one of the last of several families attending Bethel. They and another family now attend First Mennonite Church of Morton (Ill.). One former Bethel family attends the Baptist church; the other families attend other churches in the area.

Sommer attends First Mennonite of Morton with his wife, Susan Sommer, former administrator for Illinois Mennonite Conference and currently board chair for The Mennonite, Inc.—*Anna Groff*

Bhutanese-Nepali Church of Pittsburgh baptizes 13

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—Newly appointed moderator of Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC) Lorne Peachey attended a baptism of 13 people into the Bhutanese-Nepali Church of Pittsburgh on Aug. 12.

The baptism was at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa. More than 70 people attended. Peachey said on Aug. 14 of the newest congregation affiliated with AMC: "Their enthusiasm for the gospel, their sincere desire to follow Jesus, and their unabashed willingness to share the good news—as evidenced by last Sunday's baptisms—is a gift and an inspiration for us."—*AMC*

Carol Roth

Native Assembly meets in Mississippi

Brander McDonald, a Cree recording artist, leads worship with Quinten Willis and Jared Cotton from Choctaw Christian at the biennial Native Assembly, held July 23-26 in Philadelphia, Miss. More than 150 attended, including about 30 from Canada. Carol Roth, staff leader for Native Mennonite Ministries, says she hopes the 2014 gathering will be in Canada, though obtaining passports for the older members creates an obstacle.—*Anna Groff*

Keim reappointed president of Hesston

HESSTON, Kan.—The Hesston College Board of Overseers has announced the reappointment of Howard Keim as president of Hesston College for a third term. Keim officially began serving Jan. 1, 2005, and the next four-year term will begin Jan. 1, 2013.

"Howard is a respected leader, and his role as president of Hesston College was highly supported. The Hesston College Board is grateful that Dr. Keim will continue his leadership at Hesston College," said Kelvin Friesen, incoming chair of the Hesston College Board of Overseers. "His commitment to high academic standards, the future of Hesston College, Mennonite Church USA and its values, and personal faith will serve the college and the church for years to come." Norm Yoder was serving as board chair at the time of the review.—*Hesston College*

Everett Metzler, teacher and pastor, dies at 81

ELKHART, Ind.—Known for his wry sense of humor, ability to fix anything mechanical and humble approach to mission, Everett Metzler, 81, died July 26 at his home in Goshen, Ind.

Metzler and his wife, Margaret, taught English in China from 1985-1996 with China Educational Exchange, a predecessor agency to Mennonite Partners in China and a partner of Mennonite Mission Network. As the first long-term teachers at the agency, the Metzlers served as mentors to later teachers and were highly revered by both students and fellow mission workers.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Solar energy lights up classrooms at Hinkletown Mennonite School

EPHRATA, Pa.—Students at Hinkletown Mennonite School in Ephrata will look at the weather forecast in a whole new way this fall as they monitor the results of the sun's energy in their own classroom. Through new solar panels installed at the school, HMS will meet much of its energy needs through renewable sources while giving students opportunities to investigate creation care in real-life ways.

Four hundred sixty-eight solar panels have been installed on the roofs of HMS and will generate more than 75 percent of the current electrical needs of the school. Under the terms of the Power Purchase Agreement, Sun Energy LLC is placing the solar panels and will provide the electricity at a negotiated rate that is favorable for long-term savings for the school, estimated at over $250,000 through the life of the panels. The system has been installed by Advanced Solar Industries, a New Holland, Pa.-based, HMS parent-connected business.—*Melissa L. Beidler*

Western Mennonite School

Hands-on learning

Western Mennonite high school freshmen (from left) Kirsten Newman, Elyssa Fahndrich and Emily Nye explore the wildlife at Drift Creek Camp on the Oregon Coast during their environmental science mini-term experience.—*Western Mennonite School*

Bethel team academic national champions

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Not all championships are won on the field, court or course, as the Bethel College golf team proved.

The Golf Coaches Association of America informed Bethel coach Gregg Dick Aug. 1 that his 2011-12 team had been named academic national champion of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

To be considered for the honor, a team must submit a GPA of 3.0 or higher (the average of the GPAs for each player on its official squad list for the academic year). The GCAA names national champions in six divisions—NCAA Divisions I, II and III, NJCAA D I and NJCAA D II, and NAIA.—*Bethel College*

Evangelical Mennonite Conference celebrates its bicentennial

STEINBACH, Manitoba—In 2012, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, a Canadian conference, is celebrating its 200th anniversary.

The conference began in Russia (now southern Ukraine) in 1812, and was called the "Kleine Gemeinde" (Small Church) when it broke away from a larger body because of its concerns about preserving holiness and nonresistance.

The group moved to North America in 1874–75, with most members residing in western Canada. It changed its name to Evangelical Mennonite Church in 1952 and Evangelical Mennonite Conference in 1959.

Currently it has a weekly attendance of about 7,800, 7,200 members and 62 churches in nine regions across five provinces in Canada. It has an active missions program in about two dozen countries.—*Tim Dyck*

Two Goshen College students awarded theological fellowships

GOSHEN, Ind.—Two Goshen College students were awarded a 2012 Fund for Theological Education Undergraduate Fellowship. Seniors Jeffrey Moore and Emily Hedrick received the fellowships to help fund their ministerial explorations. FTE is a nonprofit organization that seeks to cultivate and support young Christian leaders through a summer conference.

Moore is from Ashland, Ohio, majoring in Bible and religion and communications. This summer he participated in the Ministry Inquiry Program by shadowing the lead pastor at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, Ohio.

Hedrick is from Telford, Pa., majoring in music and Bible and religion. She has served as a student ministry leader and chapel planning assistant, and this summer she worked on a farm in London, Ohio.—*Goshen College*

200,000 newly displaced in Eastern Congo conflict

GOMA, Democratic Republic of the Congo—Since April of this year, more than 200,000 people have fled their villages and fields in the region, bringing the total number of internally displaced people in DRC to more than 2 million.

Between 30,000 and 40,000 of the displaced have become refugees in neighboring Rwanda and Uganda, but the majority has joined other people either in overcrowded camps in North or South Kivu, or with host families.

On July 15, Mennonite Central Committee staff and emergency services staff of the Church of Christ of Congo, an MCC partner for more than 15 years, visited Kibati. Their report will serve as the basis for an emergency response from MCC.—*MCC*

Hazard pay

Cyneatha Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

I was talking with an educator the other day who said something funny, and the phrase stuck with me. Though it was said as a joke, I wondered how serious the implications really were.

The educator said that he told his boss after being transferred to a different school, that he needed "hazard pay." He talked about the serious situations of violence and unexplainable anger that fills the classroom and many children every day. He talked about how sad it is to try and help those who are so lost they are unable to accept or even reach out for help.

Hazard pay is a form of compensation granted to staff members who have been asked to report for work in duty stations where hazardous conditions prevail, such as war or active hostilities, and where the evacuation of families and nonessential staff has taken place. It is a term used in the military, yet it was being used to explain the current situation in a public school in the United States. In many schools in America, teachers, students and visitors put their lives at risk simply by showing up.

If every church chose one school in its community to support, how much different would our schools become.

The more I pondered the phrase the more concerned I became. What is happening to our children, and how are we the church responding? Why is it so hard to admit that the educational system we have in place is not working? Administration, educators, parents, governmental policy and students all have to take some blame and need to look at how they are playing a part in this mess. Balancing budgets, bad union contracts, horrible governmental policy, poor parenting, apathetic students, while we the church are fully involved and sitting on the sideline. For every Christian fighting for change, working to save our children and schools and putting themselves in harm's way, there are hundreds if not thousands more sitting back letting them take the blows.

"Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).

This passage speaks of the Messiah taking on the hard job of redemption of all humankind. The imagery of war and a warrior going into battle and being victorious because God has chosen him to free others can be used for people going into what has become daily warzones in our schools. The Messiah will not only go into dangerous situations but when victorious he will share the rewards with everyone. The Messiah's "hazard pay" is the best God can offer. His reward will change all creation. The Messiah's portion will be great, and he will share it with the strong.

To every educator, school staff person and student that continues to go into dangerous school settings with the desire to do what is right, they will be numbered as the strong. Jesus will share his reward with them.

"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father" (John 10:17-18).

But what about those of us (Christians) sitting on the sidelines? How can we assist our first responders? If every church chose one school in its community to support, how much different would our schools become. If we prayed for them daily, sent adults to patrol the neighborhoods as children walk to and from school and engaged the children with a smile and a simple hello, what would be the result?

We must no longer sit on the sidelines. We must assist our Lord and Savior by getting in the battle. We will receive "hazard pay"—not from any governmental agency but from the Creator himself.

Before Pieter Jansz there was Tunggul Wulung

In the standard telling of the story, the history of the Mennonite mission movement nearly always begins with the story of the Dutch Mennonite Mission Board and the work of its first missionary, Pieter Jansz.

In 1847, Mennonites in the Netherlands, who had supported the British Missionary Society for many years, founded their own mission society. Four years later, they sent Pieter Jansz and his wife, Wilhelmina, to north central Java, where he began teaching in the small coastal town of Jepara. On March 16, 1854, Jansz baptized a group of five Javanese believers, marking the foundations of what was to become the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church (GITJ)—the first Mennonite church whose members were not primarily of European background. By all accounts, Pieter and Wilhelmina were innovative and gifted missionaries. Pieter worked tirelessly as a preacher, teacher, administrator and scholar. In 1888, he completed the first translation of the New Testament into Javanese and was instrumental in creating a Javanese dictionary.

But the true beginnings of the GITJ were actually much more complicated. A fuller history must include a central role for the Javanese mystic and prophet Kyai Ibrahim Tunggul Wulung (ca. 1800-1885). The story of Tunggul Wulung raises important questions for contemporary Mennonites about how the gospel is embedded within the particularities of culture and how we will tell the stories of our increasingly global Mennonite church.

Following a failed uprising of the Javanese against the Dutch colonizers in the middle of the 19th century, a local hero of the struggle, Kyai Ngabhoolah, retreated to a hermitage on Mount Kelud for a period of meditation and prayer. There Kyai had a vision of a famous 12th-century Javanese general, Tunggul Wulung, who was closely associated with the "Just King"—a messianic figure the Javanese believed would restore justice and harmony to their land. At the same time, Kyai began to read the Bible and slowly became convinced that Jesus Christ was the long-awaited Just King. At that point he changed his name to Tunggul Wulung (eventually adding "Ibrahim" as his Christian name) and began to teach the gospel in a distinctly Javanese idiom as a "guru ngelmu" (teacher of wisdom).

Almost immediately, Tunggul Wulung attracted numerous followers in the area around Mount Muria in central Java. At the heart of his message was a vision for creating independent Christian communities, clearly separated from the dominant Muslim culture, freed from the onerous labor obligations imposed by the Dutch government on Javanese peasants, and committed to preserving Javanese culture, language and folkways. In a jungle clearing in Bondo (Jepara), Tunggul Wulung helped establish the first of these Christian settlements, which he hoped would embody the virtues of the kingdom of the Just King.

When Jansz and Tunggul Wulung first met in 1854, the exchange did not go well. Jansz thought Tunggul Wulung's beliefs were too syncretistic—an eclectic blend of Islam, Buddhism, Javanese mysticism and Christianity that lacked sufficient theological clarity. Tunggul Wulung, in turn, regarded Jansz as a proud Westerner who was too enmeshed in Dutch culture for the two to work together.

Yet both continued in their missionary efforts. Between 1853 and 1875, Tunggul Wulung traveled as an evangelist throughout all of Java. When he died in February 1885, he left behind at least four large congregations and more than 1,000 members. In the meantime, Jansz came to recognize the strength of the settlement model for church planting and spent the rest of his life trying to convince the Dutch mission board of the wisdom of the strategy.

The congregations founded by Tunggul Wulung and those established by Pieter Jansz were both important foundations for the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church, a staunchly indigenous church that today numbers some 40,000 baptized members. Soehadiweko Djojodihardjo, one of the most influential 20th-century leaders of the GITJ and an active participant in Mennonite World Conference, openly acknowledged his spiritual debts to Ibrahim Tunggul Wulung.

In May 2010, the GITJ marked the 70th anniversary of its formation as a synod with the publication of *The Way of the Gospel in the World of Java*, a history of the GITJ written by Sigit Heru Sukoco and Lawrence Yoder. By reframing the origins of the GITJ in a context larger than the arrival of Western missionaries the book—still awaiting publication in English—is a model for future historians. Before Pieter Jansz there was Tunggul Wulung. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

The story of Tunggul Wulung raises important questions for contemporary Mennonites about how the gospel is embedded within the particularities of culture.

What to do when the powers drag their feet?

In Kansas, where I live, we have experienced a second consecutive summer of extreme heat and drought. We are not alone. People I talk to keep hoping this is an anomaly, a simple weather pattern that will change and bring cooler, wetter weather next summer.

Would that it were true. But the overwhelming evidence from climate scientists around the world is that climate change is happening. And "an increasing body of science points to rising dangers from the ongoing buildup of human-related greenhouse gases—produced mainly by the burning of fossil fuels and forests," according to a report in the *New York Times*.

Furthermore, "global emissions of carbon dioxide jumped by the largest amount on record in 2010" (5.9 percent). This trend, scientists fear, "will make it difficult, if not impossible, to forestall severe climate change in coming decades."

Meanwhile, political powers have generally put the brakes on taking any kind of concerted action to address this problem. The United Nations can't agree on a plan, and the U.S. Congress is influenced by money from fossil fuel companies and ideological foes to the idea that humans contribute to climate change.

A growing number of businesses recognize that short-term profits aren't too helpful when long-term survival is in question, and there are some hopeful changes being made. But unless the majority of political powers get on board and make significant changes in the production of greenhouse gases, the heat and droughts and storms will likely continue.

I say likely because science deals in probabilities, not certainties. Many people seem to think that if something isn't certain they don't have to worry about it, especially if it means they'll have to change how they live.

There has been an established scientific consensus about the role of climate change in causing weather extremes, but a recent paper by James D. Hansen, a prominent NASA climate scientist, and two co-authors has gone further in tying specific weather events to climate change.

According to the paper, published online on Aug. 6, "scientists can claim with near certainty that events like the Texas heat wave last year, the Russian heat wave of 2010 and the European heat wave of 2003 would not have happened without the planetary warming caused by the human release of greenhouse gases," writes Justin Gillis the *New York Times*.

The paper argues that "the percentage of the earth's land surface covered by extreme heat in the summer has soared in recent decades, from less than 1 percent in the years before 1980 to as much as 13 percent in recent years."

In an interview, Hansen says that "the change is too large to be natural," and adds, "It's just going to get worse."

The response of his scientific colleagues, however, was split. Some experts agreed with the paper's findings, while others were not persuaded that specific heat waves could be tied to global warming.

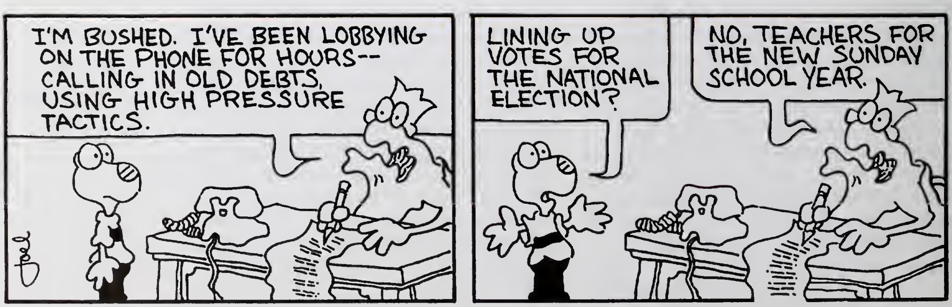
One climate scientist, Andrew J. Weaver, "compared the warming of recent years to a measles outbreak popping up in different places. As with a measles epidemic, he said, it makes sense to suspect a common cause," writes Gillis.

While the powers drag their feet, what do we do? Ignore the evidence and hope for the best? Let the next generation take care of it?

Perhaps what we do individually seems small, insignificant. But Mennonites have often claimed we are called to be faithful, not just effective. Let's be faithful.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


I'M BUSHED. I'VE BEEN LOBBYING ON THE PHONE FOR HOURS-- CALLING IN OLD DEBTS, USING HIGH PRESSURE TACTICS.
LINING UP VOTES FOR THE NATIONAL ELECTION?
NO, TEACHERS FOR THE NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR.
Joel
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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “If women are ever to achieve real equality as leaders, then we have to stop accepting male behavior and male choices as the default and the ideal.”
>
> —Anne-Marie Slaughter in *The Atlantic*

African gadgets help fight poverty

African gadgets hold great promise in fighting poverty, say development experts. Now there’s a website (www.africagadget.com) dedicated to showcasing African ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit. Bloggers and readers contribute pictures, videos and stories from around the continent to show how Africans in some of the most unlikely places are deploying their ingenuity to fashion better lives.—*The Marketplace*

Catholics and the bishops’ protest

Nearly two-thirds of Catholics (64 percent) have heard at least a little about the bishops’ protests against a number of government policies, including Obama administration policies requiring religious institutions such as universities and hospitals to provide contraceptive services to their employees. But just 22 percent of Catholics say they have heard a lot about them. Moreover, only 32 percent Catholic churchgoers say their priest has spoken out on this issue at Mass.

By a 56 to 36 percent margin, Catholics who are aware of the bishops’ protests about what they believe are infringements on religious liberty say they agree with the bishops’ concerns. Among all Americans who are aware of the protests, there is less support for the bishops’ position: 41 percent agree with the bishops’ concerns, while 47 percent disagree.—*Pew Forum Communications*

The median white U.S. household has 22 times more wealth than the median black household—a gap that has doubled since 2005. The median black household saw a 60 percent decline in its net worth over five years, to just $4,955. —*cnn.com*

The Nine Nanas

For three decades, poor families in West Tennessee have been receiving surprise gifts of baked goods from anonymous strangers. Now, the mystery benefactors have been identified—a group of women who call themselves the “Nine Nanas” and consider it their mission to aid the unfortunate. The women, ages 54 to 72, began putting aside money to help struggling families 35 years ago, finding their targets by eavesdropping in hair salons and grocery stores. They have since given away $900,000 in food, clothes and help with bills—always accompanied by a freshly baked pound cake left on a doorstep or window-sill before dawn. “We let people know that someone out there cares enough to do something,” said one Nana.—*The Week*

Numbers to ponder

- Percentage of 2012 Oscar voters who were white: **94**
- Percentage who were male: **77**
- Percentage of total acting Oscars awarded to African Americans since 1929: **4**
- Number of best director Oscars awarded to women since 1929: **1**
- Population of Copenhagen: **549,050**
- Percentage of Copenhagen residents who commute by bicycle to work or school: **55**
- Total amount of health costs saved in Copenhagen by cycling rather than driving in 2010: **$302 million**—*Yes! Magazine*

Amish among fastest-growing groups

The Amish are one of the fastest-growing religious groups in North America, according to a new census by researchers at Ohio State University released July 27. According to the survey, a new community sprouts up every 3½ weeks, nearly 250,000 Amish live in the United States and Canada, and the population is expected to exceed 1 million by 2050.—*Religion News Service*

Asian-Americans less religious, diverse

The most comprehensive study of religion and Asian-Americans to date finds them less religious than most Americans but far more religiously diverse. “Asian-Americans are a study in contrasts, with religious groups that run the gamut from highly religious to highly secular,” said Cary Funk, lead researcher on “Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths,” released June 19 by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.—*Religion News Service*

10 most dangerous U.S. jobs

1. **Fishing**
2. **Logging**
3. **Aircraft pilots and flight engineers**
4. **Farming and ranching**
5. **Mining**
6. **Roofing**
7. **Refuse and recyclable material collectors**
8. **Truck drivers**
9. **Stuntmen**
10. **Police and sheriff’s patrol officers**

—*yahoo.com*

A life of opportunities

How does an Amish girl from rural Iowa grow up to serve on a New England city council, move to Afghanistan and eventually work at the esteemed Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation?

by Anna Groff

Joyce Bontrager Lehman in Mali in April 2008 during a trip for a potential project with Oxfam America, which the Gates Foundation did fund. Photo by Jeff Ashe of Oxfam America

Joyce Bontrager Lehman's journey takes her from Kalona to Kabul to the Gates Foundation and beyond.

For Joyce Bontrager Lehman, a question like that takes her back to her childhood, when—not wanting to miss out on an opportunity—she begged to join her father on his buggy trips into the town of Kalona. Fernandis Bontrager responded, "You can go. But you have to keep up."

Fernandis walked briskly from the bank to the feed mill, the hardware store and the grocery store. Joyce trotted along behind, working hard to keep up.

"What was it like for me to be at the foundation? I was trying to keep up," she says.

Joyce's life is slower since she left the Gates Foundation in April and moved back to Keene, N.H., where she is doing consulting work and hopes to continue writing a book. She served on Keene's city council in the mid-'90s, helping lead the city of about 25,000 people. She also returns to the Mennonite Congregation of Boston, where she has been a member for more than 30 years.

Joyce left Keene 15 years ago for a job as a business professor at Goshen (Ind.) College, then to work for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), which took her to Afghanistan. Lehman stayed on in Afghanistan three more years with organizations other than MEDA. In January 2008—having left Kabul less than a month earlier—she took the job with the Gates Foundation in Seattle. This also allowed her to be near her two adult children living in the Northwest—an added bonus.

Working as program officer of financial services for the poor offered a constant intellectual challenge, as the Gates Foundation demands results for every project funded.

"I realized how hard it is to give money in a way that has the highest potential for impact," she says. "If you don't have impact, then what is the use?"

Despite the challenges, Joyce says she strongly resonates with the mission and objective of the foundation: "All lives have equal value" and, "Every person should have the opportunity to live a healthy and productive life."

"Opportunity" is now Joyce's favorite word.

"In all the work I've done overseas, I've realized that we all want the same thing—a chance," she says.

Often when interacting with poor individuals we feel guilty and turn our gaze, or we patronize them, thinking we have the solution, she says. Instead, Joyce points to Warren Buffett's statement that he "won the ovarian lottery."

"Opportunity is the only difference between us and the developing world," she says. "We're not better or smarter. We are just lucky."

She believes her Mennonite background coupled with her work and travel experiences enabled her to think more holistically about development—being aware of unintended consequences and aiming for a more demand-driven approach rather than a supply-driven one.

"We need to take the time to talk to the people we want to help and ask them what they need," she says, giving as an example the huge bundles of clothing sent to Africa from the United States. This action essentially destroys the tailoring industry in many countries.

> We need to take the time to talk to the people we want to help and ask them what they need.
> —Joyce Bontrager Lehman

MEDA, Gates Foundation and others work to avoid such negative outcomes. In the past 30 years, microfinance has focused on providing access to microcredit, and this remains part of the solution, Joyce says. However, her work at the Gates Foundation looked at a range of formal financial services—savings, insurance, payment systems, money transfers—needed by poor individuals all over the world.

Joyce points to an example in Kenya. At least 15 million Kenyans not only have cell phones but have a special application that functions as an electronic wallet. This allows them to store monetary value in their phones and transfer that value to another person who has the same application. Safaricom—the mobile network operator—offered this service but did not predict its evolution as users figured out how to use the service in all sorts of creative ways. Safaricom responded by placing agents all over the country to serve as

Joyce Bontrager Lehman (right) with the Kamal family in the Wardak Province in Afghanistan.

Photo provided

cash in-cash out points where people could exchange their hard currency for electronic money.

"Our research shows that the millions of poor people in Kenya with M-PESA are better able to withstand the shocks that will inevitably come their way," says Joyce. M is for "mobile" and Pesa means "money" in Swahili. Mobile technology also has the potential to facilitate financial inclusion by connecting the billions of unbanked poor to the formal financial system.

I have a fairly high tolerance for what other people would call risk.—Joyce Bontrager Lehman

Kalona

Joyce's journey began as an Amish girl in Iowa with her maternal grandparents, John Miller and Barbara Yoder.

"I have never stopped thinking of myself as a little Amish farm girl from Iowa and have been truly astonished by the opportunities I've had and the places I've been," Lehman says.

She credits her family as planting the seeds for her adventurous spirit.

"There is something about me or my DNA or my family, but I have a fairly high tolerance for what other people would call risk," she says, which explains her willingness to seize the opportunity and live in Afghanistan with MEDA.

Her grandfather was one of 12 children. But he was the only one who took the initiative to walk 20 miles along the railroad tracks to Iowa City and attend the University of Iowa long enough to get a teaching certificate. He was a public school teacher in the Kalona area for five years prior to getting married and settling into the more traditional farm life. But he never lost his love of books or curiosity about the world around him.

Her uncle Thomas Miller stepped in to fill the void left when her grandfather died. As a young Amish man, he had sold his horse and bought passage to Europe to attend the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, seeing in person the race made famous in the movie *Chariots of Fire*. He came to the farm and took Joyce with him on day trips. He influenced Joyce with his stories, puzzles and sense of adventure.

Her mother, Susan, did not have the same opportunities as her brother Thomas. Joyce believes her mother would have made a wonderful schoolteacher, but that was not an option for a girl.

"She never spoke of it to us, but I know she wanted more for her two daughters," Joyce says.

The night before Joyce hoped to begin high school, she eavesdropped as her mother urged her father to allow her to attend. By this time, her parents had joined a church in the Conservative Mennonite Conference. But that did not fundamentally change the fact that her father did not value higher education. He relented, but the conversation continued to some extent nearly every year until Joyce earned a college degree.

"That gift from my mother is of such magnitude that I can hardly talk about it," says Joyce.

Despite his views on education, her father—like others in her family—loved to travel and explore. After the end of World War II, Fernandis volunteered to work on a cattle boat to Italy, the first of many international trips. In Trieste, they unloaded the cattle that had been donated by Amish, Mennonite and Brethren farmers. The boat stopped in Venice for a few days of sightseeing before returning home.

Joyce's immediate family took many trips, going as far south as Mexico City, north to Canada and spending winters in Florida. They traveled by train or hired a driver in the years before they owned a car.

"It's no surprise that my first career was as a teacher and that my first overseas trip included visits to Paris and Venice," she says.

Later, in the mid-'90s, Joyce felt restless working as a CPA in her private practice. Before this she and her husband had divorced. Joyce describes the divorce as a "great loss" that brought about two realizations: life as she knew it was completely different, and the loss created new opportunities, and doors opened.

For example, one door opened in 1997, when Len Geiser, chair of the Goshen (Ind.) College business department, called and offered her a job.

"To be honest, before I hung up the phone, I knew I would go," she says. She promptly told her partner at her firm that she needed a change for a year.

After one year, however, she decided to sell her practice and stay at the college for another year. During this time she also joined the board of MEDA, which asked her to join the staff as a microfinance consultant after she finished teaching.

"I was at the point of my life where I was able to take advantage of opportunities," she says.

Afghanistan

Joyce first went to Afghanistan in 2003, when MEDA was asked to send a consultant to prepare a business plan to start up a microcredit program. She stayed on in Afghanistan three more years with organizations other than MEDA.

"I won't pretend that the year in Kabul was easy," she says. "It was the most challenging year of my professional life, but personally it was the most rewarding."

Joyce says she is amused when people ask her if she had to cover her head in Afghanistan.

"Growing up Amish, I had to cover my head and wear unusual clothes for much of my young life. So it really wasn't a big stretch to wear modest clothing and a headscarf when walking outside," she says.

There were other similarities, as well. Afghan society is patriarchal. Men and women are separated in the houses of worship, and women are not permitted to speak in the mosque.

"There was even an eerie if somewhat comforting similarity between the call to prayer from the mosque and the sound of the Vorsinger who leads the singing at all Amish church services," she says.

She also worked with a woman who reminded her of her younger self.

"She, too, was dependent on her father's permission to work outside the home," Joyce says.

Other commonalities include the centrality of family, respect and care for the elders, children who immediately become part of the rhythm of the family life and remain so even after they marry.

"There is a sense of place, a family home, a deep connection to the land, a unique mother tongue, an oral history, a village, a community and, yes, a tribe," she says.

Similar to Amish culture, at the foundation of the Afghan cultural traditions is a faith that is more often lived than verbalized.

"In both cases it is equally difficult to distinguish between the two. Is it theology or is it tradition?" she says. "If we are careful to listen and observe, we soon understand that we are more alike than we are different."

Joyce experienced this realization throughout her life—that she was not so different from the women in Afghanistan and that poor people are not so different from wealthy people.

Grateful for her own opportunities throughout her life, Joyce continues to work to help others—striving so that people all over the world are offered at least "a chance."

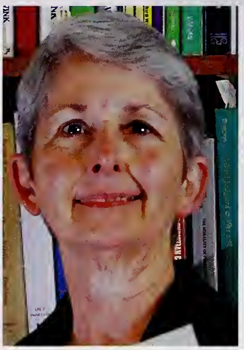
Joyce Bontrager Lehman's parents, Fernandis and Susan Bontrager.
Photo provided

Similar to Amish culture, at the foundation of the Afghan cultural traditions is a faith that is more often lived than verbalized.

Anna Groff is associate editor of The Mennonite. *This article is based on Lehman's 2011 MEDA convention speech and on interviews with her.*

QUESTIONS FOR women leaders

Growing up in a congregation that prescribed limited roles for women, I had to face my fears about becoming a public figure.—Lee Snyder



Lee Synder is president emeritus of Bluffton (Ohio) University. She chairs the Mennonite Health Services Alliance Board and serves on the boards of Bridge of Hope National and Western Mennonite School. Her previous roles include vice president and academic dean of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and the first moderator of Mennonite Church USA, from 1999 to 2001.

Do or did you have a woman leader as a mentor?

Most of my mentors have been men who encouraged me to pursue new responsibilities as opportunities became available. Often I was the only woman in these leadership groups, but that has changed greatly. Now I have a number of women mentors and leadership partners.

Are you mentoring young women who may be potential church leaders?

Yes, but not in any formal role. Young women have expressed appreciation in retrospect for ways I affirmed their gifts, encouraged them to pursue leadership opportunities or to continue their education—a key I believe to preparing for church leadership.

If so, how is her (their) experience the same or different from yours?

Women are now actively recruited for leadership roles; no longer is it particularly unusual for women to be selected as a pastor or CEO. The aspect that remains the same, I suspect, is that leaders develop through affirmation and a sense of call—both critical in my own journey.

What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?

The impediments I faced were more internal than external. Growing up in a congregation that prescribed limited roles for women, I had to face my fears about becoming a public figure. Mentors in the faith community were significant in the process of discerning a call and instrumental in helping me consider new possibilities.

When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?

"Be properly scared and do what you have to do," Flannery O'Connor said once. A Scripture version of that is Deuteronomy 30:11: "Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. (NIV)" Balancing a sense of inadequacy with the mystery of God's call to be a part of some larger work is something I am still learning.

For the next 12 months, *The Mennonite* will honor a variety of women leaders in Mennonite Church USA. This month we feature Joyce Bontrager Lehman, development worker, on our cover. Olivette McGhee, president of Native Mennonite Ministries, and Lee Synder, president emeritus of Bluffton (Ohio) University, kick off the series of Q&As. We hope you enjoy reading about these women's experiences.—*Anna Groff*

I may have been inexperienced or lacked knowledge, but no one made me feel like I wasn't accepted.—Olivette McGhee

Olivette McGhee is the president of Native Mennonite Ministries and president of the women's group at Poarch Community Church in Atmore, Ala. In the past she served on the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and the boards of Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Education Agency.

Do or did you have a woman leader as a mentor?

I had women I looked up to and modeled my life after. The main individuals were my mother and our pastor's wife, Ida Weaver, at Poarch Community Church. She encouraged me and supported me when I was at meetings and had to be away from my family. I miss her. She now lives in Kansas and has Alzheimer's.

Are you mentoring young women who may be potential church leaders?

I am not officially mentoring a young woman at this time.

What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?

Fortunately, I never felt unaccepted as a women leader. I may have been inexperienced or lacked knowledge, but no one made me feel like I wasn't accepted. It is not uncommon for a woman to be a pastor in the South, and the larger Mennonite church also now accepts women leaders.

My small church offers an advantage in this sense. With about 70 members, I know everyone and get to interact with everyone. Everyone seems to want to help me and encourage me. When I have taken positions in the church like teaching Sunday school, leading music, leading the women's group and more, I have had everyone's support. I've been blessed.

When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?

Regarding my board experience, I did not know a whole lot about the larger church or the organizations I served on the board. What I knew about Mennonites was what I learned at my small church. I educated myself through a lot of reading and asking questions of other board members when I didn't understand something. They were very helpful. After a few years, I could contribute. However, even after learning more about the church, I still faced struggles and had questions. I appreciated being able to talk with the elders of my church about the issues the larger church is processing, such as divorce and homosexuality.

My main challenge at the moment is my health, as I have trouble walking. At the Native Mennonite Assembly this summer, someone had to push me around in a wheelchair, and I felt like I couldn't contribute as much. However, people offer to help with small gestures. For example, many young boys opened the door for me. It was challenging but not impossible. I have trouble asking for help, so this is humbling.

As Christians, we are called by God to accept the Hispanic strangers in our land.

A ministry of open arms

by Celia Lehman

© Vicki Kratzer

Raul and Vanita Tadeo never know what to expect when their phone rings. Why?

In the past they felt God's call to go to Mexico to evangelize people. They moved back to Dalton, Ohio, in 1992. That is when the phone started ringing.

Many calls came from migrants from Spanish-speaking countries who could not speak English. Word got out that the Tadeos were fluent in both languages, and their telephone number became busy. Not only could the Tadeos communicate, they were willing to help. They realized it was a way to meet people's spiritual and physical needs not only in Wayne and Holmes counties but in Mexico as well.

Life can be difficult for people who understand little or no English and have no one to interpret for them. Their needs encompass many areas:

- medical
- employment
- housing
- legal papers
- mechanical problems
- mistreatment
- working with local authorities
- interpreting and translating.

These are common requests being addressed by a loving pastor and devoted wife. What do they do about it?

Juanita, a registered nurse, takes pregnant women to a physician, talks to them as they sit in the waiting room and interprets what the doctor says. She cooks for and invites people for a meal, shares produce from her garden, gives those who have no place to go a place to sleep, and takes time to explain whatever people want to know.

Raul, a minister, has literature available in Spanish, talks to them about activities they're interested in, makes connections for places to work, visits those incarcerated, talks with understanding about the difficulties the men especially face and tries to help them. He helps with the activities for various age levels such as volleyball, wiener roasts, videos or visiting.

Haroldo Nunes (left) welcomes a young man to worship. Photo provided

Hispanics began attending Salem Mennonite Church, Wooster, Ohio, which the Tadeos attend. After church, the Hispanic group wanted to spend the afternoon together. At first they went to the Tadeos' home for lunch. As the group grew, families took turns hosting the group, and now a carry-in meal is held the last Sunday of each month in the church.

This ministry provided financial help but also helped people find employment, receive English lessons and solve other pertinent needs.

In 2001, a group of men sensed the need of getting involved in this ministry. They made contact with some of the Mennonite churches in the area for a financial stipend. That is when the Open Arms Ministry began. This ministry provided financial help but also helped people find employment, receive English lessons and solve other pertinent needs.

Many people became involved in the Open Arms Ministry. An Amishman has hired many workers for his furniture industry, farmers have employed workers, individuals have started ▶

One of the activities held at Camp Luz.
Photo provided

English classes, employers in larger industries hire workers, and people donate Spanish books and money for Bibles to be handed out.

In 2004, Raul coordinated a retreat at Camp Luz that included fellowship, worship and Bible teaching for Hispanics from neighboring areas. A total of 119 from various Mennonite churches of Ohio came.

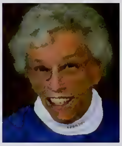
With growing numbers of people involved, Raul needed assistance. He spoke to Haroldo Nunes of the North Clinton Mennonite Church in Wauseon, Ohio, and invited him to come help with the work in this area. Raul knew Haroldo felt a call to ministry among Hispanics. Haroldo accepted the invitation and moved to Orrville, Ohio, with Esmirna, his wife, and their two children, Gabriel and Paulo. Baby Laura was born here five years ago.

To the Hebrew people who knew what it meant to be strangers and exiles, God sent a message: "You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34).

Now in the Salem Church, two groups worship simultaneously each Sunday morning. When a minister preaches in English, interpretation is given via wireless equipment through earphones worn by Spanish-speaking worshipers. When preaching is in Spanish, the interpretation is given in English. Choruses and hymns are projected on a screen in both languages. One Sunday's attendance included 27 Spanish-speaking and 34 English-speaking people.

In 2007, the Willing Hearts, a group of church leaders and pastors, came together to sponsor mission projects in the Ohio Conference. One was a mission festival for Open Arms Hispanic Ministries. It was called an intercultural fiesta and brought Hispanics and non-Hispanics together for a time of fellowship and food. This event has continued and grown in attendance.

Due to problems in other countries, people have been forced into exile. They come to the United States to find a new life in the land of opportunity. To the Hebrew people who knew what it meant to be strangers and exiles, God sent a message: "You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34). As Christians, we, too, are called by God to accept the Hispanic strangers in our land. Not only should we open our homes and tables to welcome them but open our hearts and minds and open arms.



Celia Lehman is a member of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

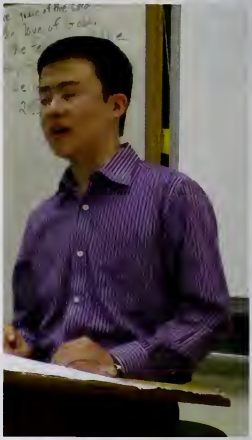
Eastern Mennonite

Our mission is the world

by Elwood Yoder

Bible instruction in Mennonite high schools has changed.

Today we as Bible teachers don't assume our students have a working knowledge of elementary Bible stories.



Jimmy Zhao delivers a report to his Global Christianity class on Matthew Ricci, a 16th-century Chinese missionary. Photo provided

Jimmy Zhao came to me at the beginning of Bible class a few weeks ago and explained that he couldn't complete the faith heritage brochure I had assigned. My students had been challenged to dig into their family, church and denominational history and create a trifold brochure that explains their own faith heritage. Jimmy, from Beijing, China, had no faith heritage. His background is entirely secular—he had come to Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, Va., for a good education. So we discussed the project and adapted the requirements. Jimmy would give an overview of his life and family in China. Jimmy produced a fine quality brochure on his Chinese heritage.

Later, during a lesson on Matthew Ricci, a 16th-century Jesuit missionary to China, we loaded Google maps in front of the class and looked up Ricci's burial place in Beijing. Jimmy quickly realized that his home was close to Zhalan Cemetery, where Ricci and other foreign missionaries are buried. As a boy he had often played in this small park. Jimmy is now writing a biography on the life and ministry of Matthew Ricci, a Catholic missionary who adapted to Chinese culture, language and religion.

Jimmy's presence in my Global Christianity classroom illustrates three ways Bible teaching in Mennonite high schools has changed in the past two decades. First, we as Bible teachers have adapted to a variety of diversities, including the steady increase of international students in our classrooms. Second, we don't assume our students, American or from other countries, have a working knowledge of basic Bible stories. Third, our Mennonite high schools are writing or have created new Bible courses for students from abroad who have limited or no exposure to Christianity.

Hesston (Kan.) College and Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., hosted nine high school Bible teachers on their campuses April 11-13. Since Bible teachers don't have national or state professional conferences, we teachers value these network sessions to learn from each other and other Mennonite schools. We came from Peace and Justice Academy, Pasadena, Calif., to Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., and seven more schools in between.

I have a memory of attending three prior Bible teacher's conferences hosted by Mennonite colleges, dating back 20 years, but this gathering was different. We came hoping to learn from each other about how to teach Bible and church history to students from a variety of diverse backgrounds but especially the growing population of international students in our classes.

Through discussions among ourselves and with the Hesston Bible faculty, it became clear to me that our discussions were far less about structured curriculum than about how to teach in the context of diversities that include numerous denominations, a wide range of academic abilities, and students from many countries around the world.

Twenty years ago, I worked with Mennonite high school teachers to hammer out a core curriculum that most Mennonite high schools then adopted. Today, there is little emphasis on uniformity of Bible courses in Mennonite schools; instead, there is an encouragement to find creative and effective ways to teach the basic elements of an Anabaptist Mennonite Christian faith.

Today we as Bible teachers don't assume our students have a working knowledge of elementary Bible stories. With students from other religions attending our schools and with students who have little or no church background, we have a challenge to teach formative Bible stories. One senior-level Bible teacher finds that about one-third of his students know God, about one-third are neutral to Christian faith and about one-third are from other religions, are skeptics or agnostics. When I purchased a parallel Chinese-English Bible in Nanchong, China, in 2007, I didn't realize that the Bible was actually going to be used by my Chinese students in Harrisonburg, Va.

Finally, our Mennonite high schools are increasingly creating new courses or figuring out unique ways of teaching Bible to students with no or little Christian faith background. Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School offers an Introduction to Bible class for international students. International students at Bethany Christian School in Goshen, Ind., research Christianity in their home countries. Students in August at Eastern Mennonite, with between 5 and 10 percent international students from five different countries in the high school, took an Introduction to Christianity minicourse before the school year began to familiarize them with our community.

Jimmy Zhao, a junior, is a great student and teaches both students and teachers about the latest technology innovations. He occasionally falls asleep in chapel, like kids from anywhere, but he perks up when we study the history of Christianity, especially stories that connect with China or Asia. More and more students like Jimmy are coming to Mennonite high schools across the country, seeking a good education, hoping to get into a great university and accepting the Bible and church history curriculum that is a part of our programs. In Jimmy's Global Christianity class of 16 students, we speak six languages (Mandarin, Greek, Korean, Spanish, German and English), represent 10 denominations, and I'm the only local Mennonite in the classroom. Increasingly, for Mennonite high school Bible teachers, our mission is the world.

Our Mennonite high schools are increasingly creating new courses or figuring out unique ways of teaching Bible to students with no or little Christian faith background.

Elwood Yoder is social studies teacher and Bible department chair at Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, Va.

Blessed are those who question

A camp pastor affirms a group of curious and insightful girls for asking questions about God and the Bible.

by Anita Hooley Yoder

Brandy Shoup and Alexus Letcher at camp Photo provided

The girls' questions flew at me through the muggy air. "How can God and Jesus be the same person? Who wrote the Bible? Is God ever lonely? Do animals go to heaven? What did everything look like before it was made?" ▶

"These are great questions, girls," I said, awed at how the 10- and 11-year-olds articulated concepts so simultaneously basic and profound. As the camp pastor that week, I had worked to encourage the girls' burgeoning questions through my messages and my individual interactions with them. To start the conversation with this cabin, I had had the girls each write down a question and pass it in. I unwrapped the final, crinkled paper from the group. "If you were God, what would you say?" I read with a smile.

I looked over the group of eager, sweaty faces, eyeing the girl whose thin arms stuck out from a tiny tank top, the girl with two long braids down her back. "I would tell you to keep asking these questions," I said, feeling my voice catch in my throat. "Don't ever let anyone stop you from asking questions."

Although I don't think I have ever heard a sermon on it, Genesis 18:16-33 is one of those texts that grips my mind and refuses to let go. It tells the story of Abraham's intimate conversation with God over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose grave sin Yhwh has decided to investigate and punish.

Abraham, who has relatives in those cities, approaches God and says: "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are 50 righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the 50 righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing. … Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (vv. 23-25).

What audacity! Abraham walks right up to God and asks four pointed questions, calling into question Yhwh's very character. The story continues in a comically repetitive pattern with Abraham bargaining God down to saving the city for only 10 righteous people.

Abraham is often portrayed as an ultimate example of trust in God. But Abraham did not always believe God without asking questions first.

God's promises are first pronounced to Abram in Genesis 12, prompting him to leave his home—without question, I should point out. But by the time Yhwh again appears to Abram in Genesis 15, one gets the sense that Abram is more than ready for God's great promises to get started. His first response to God is this desperate question: "O Lord God, what can you give me, for I continue childless?" (v. 2). God answers by repeating the promises, including the promise of land. Abram's response is another question: "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" (v. 8).

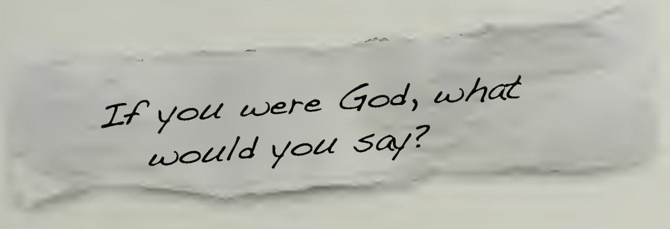
Abraham is often portrayed as an ultimate example of trust in God. But Abraham did not always believe God without asking questions first.

Of course, there are stories where Abraham does not question God, but those are the passages we hear so often in church sanctuaries or Sunday school classrooms. Abraham's ready obedience may be an important aspect of his relationship with God, but so, I think, are his questions.

Abraham is certainly not the only faithful-yet-questioning biblical character in the First Testament. Moses' relationship with God is characterized by questions from its start.

When Elohim appears to Moses in the burning bush and commissions him to bring the people out of Egypt (Exodus 3-4), Moses asks three questions that drive the continuing conversation. God remains apparently patient and accepting of these concerns of Moses, even giving Moses two signs to perform, until Moses' questions turn into a desperate plea to get out of the job; then we finally hear of Yhwh's anger burning at Moses's reluctance.

Moses becomes a revered leader of the Israelites and a personal liaison between them and God. In Exodus 32 we read the often-told story of the golden calf, which contains a less-often-told section reminiscent of Abraham's negotiating with Yhwh for the lives of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. God, noting the idolatry of the people, tells Moses, "Now let me alone, so that



If you were God, what
would you say?

my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation" (v. 10).

But Moses inquires, "Why does your wrath burn hot against your people? … Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out?' " (vv. 11-12). Moses tells God to relent and remember Yhwh's own covenant. So, the narrator tells us, "The Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people" (v. 14).

Orthodox Christianity tends to see God as untouchable and unchangeable, but that is not the full picture given to us by the Bible.

Of course, not every biblical character's questions are rewarded with transformative consideration from God. One can ask God questions in good faith or for selfish reasons. In the prophecy of Malachi the people are reproved for questioning God's love and command to return to faithfulness (1:2, 3:7-15) instead of simply living in that love and acting faithfully.

Even so, it seems that the vast majority of questioners in the Bible are kindly tolerated or even encouraged. Questions are, after all, the best of way of learning. God says the children of the Israelites will ask about the observance of Passover (Exodus 12:26), the decrees of the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:20) and memorials of stone, such as the one made after the twelve tribes crossed the Jordan River (Joshua 4). Such practices and commandments, sure to elicit questions from those unfamiliar with them, serve as teaching tools.

And no discussion of the rich legacy of questioning in the biblical tradition would be complete without mentioning Job. The book of Job erupts with angry, sarcastic and sometimes shocking questions directed toward God. While Job's friends condemn his questioning, God never does, at least in my reading of this complex and ambiguous text. Yhwh tells Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (42:7). While his friends spoke platitudes, sometimes straight from the book of Proverbs, apparently Job's questions constituted "right" speech about God.

While the First Testament contains the most striking examples of people questioning God (and getting away with it), the Second Testament is not without its own stories in this vein. Since God interacts with the people mostly through the person of Jesus, identifying stories where people truly question God can be a bit more complicated. People constantly question Jesus as a man, but there are also examples of people challenging Jesus while clearly seeing him as an agent of God. I must here mention the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-27), or the Syrophoenician woman, as she is known in Mark (7:34-40). Technically this woman does not ask Jesus a question; she presents a demand and then gives a witty retort. But she is definitely asking Jesus, as God's representative, to pay attention to her concern.

The story of the Canaanite woman, where Jesus uses surprisingly harsh language, comparing the woman to a dog, can be interpreted in many ways. But it seems to me this woman's questioning presence pushes Jesus into a new phase in his ministry. She helps Jesus understand something new or at least realize it is time to start something he has not yet acted upon—salvation for the Gentiles.

Most of the stories I have mentioned are not traditional Sunday school or sermon material. But I wish they were. How else can we show our children the power and potential for blessing that comes from daring to engage God with our concerns? Orthodox Christianity tends to see God as untouchable and unchangeable, but that is not the full picture given to us by the Bible. I am also not sure that an omnipotent, immutable God is a helpful concept for people growing up in today's postmodern world, a world where we need a theology that enables us to claim the power and responsibility we have for shaping the world in positive ways.

I want the girls I met at camp to know what strong biblical precedent they are following in their heartfelt questions. I want their young voices to never be cut off or shut down by the those who claim to speak for God. Blessed are those who question, I want to say to them. Blessed are you.

Anita Hooley Yoder is a member of Friendship Mennonite Church in Bedford Heights, Ohio.

A reflection from an encounter with squatters in Botswana

The shared, blackened pot

by Jonathan P. Larson

While in quiet conversation with a friend, I learned that her project to build a home in a suburb of our town had suddenly come to an awkward halt. The half-finished building, which had lain quiet for some weeks, had been occupied by a raft of strangers who had taken shelter there when no one was watching.

It seems that well-to-do neighbors had seen the improvised life of the squatters: the nighttime candles, the bundles of firewood, the smoke of cooking fires and the motley coming and going. They had called the owner to say they felt profoundly uneasy, and could she look into things.

With her heart in her throat she went to the site and had all her worst fears confirmed: as many as 20 strangers were camping on her property. Having glimpsed the scene, she fled out of fear for her own safety, not knowing what desperate—and brazen—people might do. It was this conundrum that she recounted as we sat together.

What was she to do now?

I suggested that we go together to initiate contact and seek some understanding with them. But we arrived the next day to find that the local police had swooped on the property early that very morning and had already taken a van load of the squatters to the precinct. There we found them. Men and women, even mothers with small infants on their backs. Some were in handcuffs, and all had the resigned, humiliated look of the wretched of the earth. They were Zimbabweans. Border-jumpers, as they are called here. The children of Robert Mugabe. A tiny eddy of a much larger tide of "les miserables" (the miserable ones) who had fled their homes as a matter of survival and been cast adrift in the neighboring countries by the millions. Here in Botswana, it is estimated by some that nearly one in five people in the country are in flight from what has befallen them at home in Zimbabwe.

This once proud, educated and productive society has been drubbed to its skinned, wobbly knees as the effects of HIV, drought, corruption, inflation and political folly have left the people utterly prostrate. I know of a family outside Bulawayo whose able-bodied breadwinners have been picked off one by one by AIDS. The surviving children of these workers have been left to the only surviving member of the family. Today she has 12 children under the age of 5 living under her shrinking roof and no means even of supporting herself.

Little wonder that a ragged band of these unfortunates should have found its way through the backcountry fences and crept under the eaves of an unfinished house seeking some shelter from life's blast. As we speak with them at the police station, we assure them that we will not press charges against them. Who could bear to see them taken to prison, or even worse, returned to their shattered country? We only ask that they return the house to its owner.

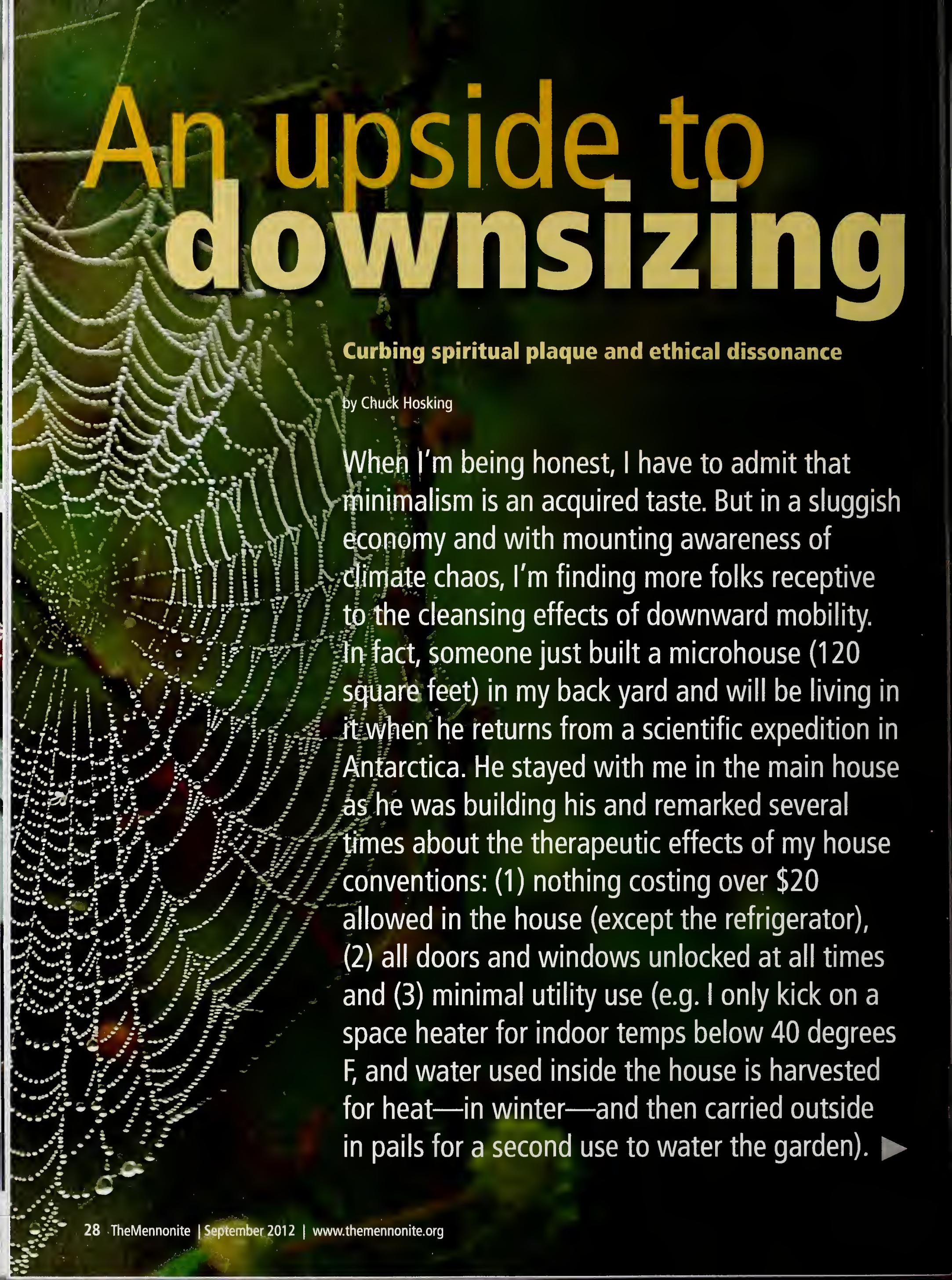
> Here in Botswana, it is estimated by some that nearly one in five people in the country are in flight from what has befallen them at home in Zimbabwe.

We accompany them to the construction site. They begin—with astonishing efficiency—to gather their belongings. They have done this many times. And the story of their troubles is far from over. The blackened cooking pots, the plastic jugs, the frayed bags in which they have folded their blankets, and clothes gathered on the unfinished entryway of the house—belongings we would cart away to a dumpster without a moment's thought. Someone will come with a battered pickup to collect them and their things—to go in search of some other unguarded corner where they will huddle together for a few days, where by the evening fires they will laugh the quiet laugh of those whose hearts are breaking, the dispossessed of the world.

Even now, the great and powerful of these countries and of the world gather at seaside villas, where, turned out in their finery, they laud each other while surrounded by body guards. If only they could sit by those evening fires in the quiet and bitter corners of our countries to hear the truth—the gritty, pitiful truth.

In this part of the world that truth reads this way: at evening, we all eat from the same blackened pot.

Jonathan P. Larson now lives in Atlanta and is author of Making Friends Among the Taliban, *upcoming from Herald Press.*



An upside to downsizing

Curbing spiritual plaque and ethical dissonance

by Chuck Hosking

When I'm being honest, I have to admit that minimalism is an acquired taste. But in a sluggish economy and with mounting awareness of climate chaos, I'm finding more folks receptive to the cleansing effects of downward mobility. In fact, someone just built a microhouse (120 square feet) in my back yard and will be living in it when he returns from a scientific expedition in Antarctica. He stayed with me in the main house as he was building his and remarked several times about the therapeutic effects of my house conventions: (1) nothing costing over $20 allowed in the house (except the refrigerator), (2) all doors and windows unlocked at all times and (3) minimal utility use (e.g. I only kick on a space heater for indoor temps below 40 degrees F, and water used inside the house is harvested for heat—in winter—and then carried outside in pails for a second use to water the garden). ▶

The God I revere values all humans and invites us all to pursue global equity—no one needs to be destitute if no one takes more than a fair share of resources (whether natural or financial) from the global commons. And a lean approach can help us feel better about ourselves as well. I view God as a Great Spirit of goodness and love, an infinite font available to all who choose to avail themselves of it. God's goodness and love can flow through us as human pipes, conduits to a world with massive spiritual needs. God is the source; we are mere conduits. But we can only be efficient conduits of God's goodness and love if our arteries are clear of spiritual plaque. Encumbrances to our partnership with God include resource use beyond our fair share (financially about $1,500 per person per year). Such excessive living is unhealthy for our souls and over time builds up as spiritual plaque in our arteries, impeding the flow of God's goodness and love to a needy planet. Robbed of a right relationship with God, our spiritual health falters, and we become disappointed with ourselves. A minimalist approach can thus be seen as an antidote to this spiritual malady.

When we affirm and profess one way of living but find ourselves actually acting differently in our daily lives, ethical dissonance occurs. The longer we diverge from the path of spiritual health that we profess and know in our innermost being to be best both for ourselves and the world at large, the more persistent is the ethical dissonance. As with spiritual plaque, ethical dissonance erodes our right relationship with God and weighs heavily on our souls, decimating respect for the person we're fated to spend our entire lives with—ourselves.

We Mennonites have an organization that exists precisely to unburden us of encumbrances to a right relationship with God: Mennonite Central Committee. This lean Mennonite program links those of us who find ourselves in possession of more than our fair share of resources with those living far below that $1,500 global median in a win-win partnership for global equity. We in the overdeveloped world plagued by illnesses of surfeit can clear out our arteries of spiritual plaque and reduce our ethical dissonance by lessening the resource destitution of folks in Asia, Africa and Latin America. MCC acts as a lean conduit free of spiritual plaque, and through its partnerships with low-income grassroots organizations allows those of us who contribute to partner with God to redeem a globally inequitable world.

Last fall, thousands of mostly young folks persistently protested corporate greed and Wall Street white-collar gambling. They reminded us that 1 percent of U.S. citizens enrich themselves at the expense of the other 99 percent. Most of this publication's readers are part of the 99 percent and likely oppose corporate greed. But viewed through a global lens, we readers find ourselves on the other side of the income divide. Anyone making $50,000 per year is part of the elite global 1 percent; anyone making $25,000 per year is part of the elite global 10 percent. And this income flows to us in part due to neoliberal globalization trade rules rigged to benefit those in the overdeveloped nations who crafted them. Since all wealth ultimately emanates from the natural resources of God's creation, and since the healthy genes, keen intellect, caring parents, country of opportunity and drive to excel that many of us were born with were all God-given gifts, it's a myth to say we "earn" our wealth.

Anyone making $50,000 per year is part of the elite global 1 percent; anyone making $25,000 per year is part of the elite global 10 percent.

Now our unearned, elite status could make us feel guilty that we're unfairly wealthy by global standards. But our guilt benefits no one. It makes us feel bad about ourselves, and those of our global siblings with dire needs are no better off for our guilt. The choice is ours. We can wallow in ethical dissonance and allow spiritual plaque to block our arteries to the free flow of God's goodness and love or by affirming a healthy dose of lean minimalism we can move up to downsizing and shed our surplus baggage to MCC to be used to forge partnerships with the global underclass. By hitching our wagons to MCC, we help build a more equitable world and redeem ourselves from global elitism. Through solidarity with our global siblings, we find meaning in life and augment our self-respect. Welcome to membership in the global majority. At long last, we're finally home.

Chuck Hosking attends Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church. See page 37 for a news story about Hosking and simple living internship he was involved with in Albuquerque.

Expand the conversation on human sexuality

Dick Thomas is moderator of Mennonite Church USA and a graduate of Penn State University.

It is increasingly clear that we see the world and read the Bible through the lens of our life. These musings come from the lens of my reading and life experience during the past year.

I live in Lancaster, Pa., where human sexuality is in the local newspaper on a daily basis. This newspaper recently made news by deciding to print same-sex engagements to bring it into alignment with changing community standards. It included stories of President Obama supporting same-sex marriage and Exodus International announcing its move away from reparative therapy. The Episcopal Church adopted a blessing for same-sex unions, and by a narrow vote Presbyterian Church USA maintained its current definition of marriage.

But the bigger news here has been sexual abuse. The Monsignor of the Catholic Diocese of Philadelphia was found guilty for not taking appropriate action to protect victims of sexual abuse. The biggest story has been about Penn State University covering up sexual abuse for 14 years, allowing more boys to become victims.

> Regardless of our lens on life, we can agree that sexual abuse by anyone is sin.

At a personal level, I serve as superintendent of Lancaster Mennonite School (LMS), and we faced our own sexual misconduct crisis during the past year. An assistant high school principal was fired for sexually abusing several international students who were living in his home. Also, we have worked with primary school-age children who are filled with rage because of sexual abuse, often by a relative, such as a grandfather.

These LMS experiences make the stories of sexual abuse more real to me than just reading about them in the newspaper. Also, my conversations with friends who are sexually attracted to people of the same sex make LGBT questions more than abstract discussions for me.

As a result of the LMS experience, quite a few people have shared their own stories with me regarding sexual abuse they experienced. Based on this sharing, I have no doubt it is true that 25 percent of women and 15 percent of men in our congregations have experienced some form of sexual abuse.

It seems clear that sexual abuse can be decreased if we own what is happening, implement policies to maintain sexual boundaries and develop a culture where there is openness about human sexuality rather than silence and shame. This change will require us to focus on helping and protecting victims rather than quickly working to restore the perpetrator.

From my lens, we as a church have been too silent on sexual issues that impact many in our midst and instead have talked past each other on LGBT questions. My experience calls us to focus more broadly on human sexuality, of which same-sex attraction is just one important question.

Our lenses differ, and because of the complexity of the issue of same-sex attraction and biblical interpretation, we are not likely to quickly achieve consensus on that question. However, we must be clear that we will not tolerate homophobic attitudes and that, in spite of our differences, we will demonstrate the power of Christian love and biblical faithfulness by remaining in loving conversation and discernment rather than splintering and separating.

Regardless of our lens on life, we can agree that sexual abuse by anyone is sin, and we are called by the power of the Spirit to cultivate communities of openness and accountability in our local congregations, schools and other institutions. Such communities are crucial in creating a positive environment for faith formation.

I am encouraged by efforts to make our churches safe places, especially for our children. Many congregations are reviewing and updating their child protection policies. Mennonite Church USA offers resources to empower and equip faith communities to keep children and youth safe at www.dovesnest.net. Excellent resources from MennoMedia (www.mennomedia.org/?Page=6811) and Mennonite Central Committee (abuse.mcc.org/resources/sexual-abuse) are also available, and there are many gifted people across the church who are providing wise counsel. Two such people in the LMS setting were Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz of MCC and Jim S. Amstutz, pastor of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

All this movement in our church is encouraging to me and increases our capacity to be people of healing and hope. TM

Being the church in contentious times

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.—Matthew 16:18

I don't know about the gates of Hades, but there are forces at work that make it difficult for the church to be the lighthouse God meant it to be when God instituted it.

This is not an easy time to do church. When a national calamity like 9/11 strikes, people flock to church, but when things quiet down, the national tendency is to settle back into our secular routines. Church membership is still fashionable, but commitment is lacking. When something displeases people, they are quick to move to another church or drop out altogether.

Congregational life can be viewed in three broad categories:

Preaching and worship: The preacher is the face of the church, the shepherd of the flock. Good preaching is "rightly dividing the word of truth." God blesses the ministers who make ministry their life's calling.

Music: Music is for most an indispensable part of worship. Music nourishes the soul. People have their individual tastes and preferences. They are inclined to be absolute about their music. They like singing off the wall, or they don't. Many churches now have three hymnals in use and still resort to other sources.

Polity—how the congregation makes decisions. Most congregations spend more time in committee than in prayer. Congregational governance has never been easy, but it is arguably harder now.

In former years, many congregational decisions were delegated to the bishop or some designated leadership group. These served as the shock absorber and reduced the number of controversial issues open for congregational action. Now people want to be involved, and that has its merits. Unfortunately, they find it hard to give the time meaningful involvement requires.

Congregations, even a generation ago, were more homogenous. A congregation made up predominantly of farmers and retired people was more inclined to think along similar lines. Today many congregations consist of a wide variety of professions, each bringing its own culture. I spoke with one pastor who served under four congregational chairs in five years, each with a different culture of leadership.

We appear to be living in a contentious time. What should be constructive collaboration leading to a workable consensus breaks down into quarrels and gridlock, to use the word that characterizes our national government. It is happening at all levels, including the church.

How do churches navigate their way through these choppy waters? I have three suggestions that if not the ultimate solution will at least point us in a good direction.

1. Some need to lighten up and in so doing make room for the Holy Spirit to work in our midst. It is not "my way or the highway." There are too many issues churches fought and divided over and later came to adopt to be so certain that the positions we now hold are correct and divinely inspired. In far too many situations the church is more reactionary than prophetic. A wise old church leader from an earlier era used to say, "We will need to let that plant get a little bigger before deciding if it is wheat or weeds."

2. We need to learn how to love and respect people who differ with us. We do not all come to the same conclusions. This was modeled for us by a carload of men on their way to volunteer several days at the new Mennonite Church USA office building. En route they discovered they were on opposite sides of a controversial issue facing their congregation. They did not make a U-turn and go home angry. To the contrary, their relationships were strengthened as they worked together, even though their convictions remained unchanged.

3. Consider thoughtfully who is writing our Mennonite narrative. There is much we can learn from others, and I am not suggesting we return to an isolationist mentality. But I am concerned at how uncritically we drink from other waters. We seem to find validation in inviting big-name speakers, some of whom are talented showmen. We always want to be open to learn from others while also testing the spirits to discern if they are from God. We want to be careful not to neglect or put into second place the unique message God has given us as a Mennonite church.

We do well to keep before us the quote ascribed to Augustine and used extensively by the former General Conference Mennonite Church: "In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty and in all things charity." TM

Edgar Stoesz is a member of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

In far too many situations the church is more reactionary than prophetic.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Congolese Mennonites celebrate 100 years

Church has 110,00 members, 798 churches, 95 schools and seven hospitals

James Krabill

Members of La Chorale Grand Tam-Tam (Big Drum Chorale) dances their way to the Kalonda Mennonite Church during graduation ceremonies of Kalonda Bible Institute.

Fifty-some young musicians walked nearly 100 miles July 16-22, carrying their drums, luggage and a few babies, to attend the centennial celebration of Communauté Mennonite au Congo—CMCO (Mennonite Community in Congo). For a week, the choir members from Djoko Punda, one of the first Mennonite mission stations in this central African country, traveled along rugged paths through forests and savannas, crossing rivers on makeshift bridges and spending nights in school rooms.

La Chorale Grand Tam-Tam (Big Drum Chorale) arrived in Tshikapa, the headquarters of this Mennonite denomination, to lead Mennonites from three continents in praise for "100 years of evangelization and cultural encounters," the CMCO tagline for the occasion.

In his opening address, CMCO president Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga named weaknesses and failures in the missionary approach of those who came to Congo through Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and its predecessor agencies in his historical overview of Mennonite history in Congo—paternalism, a heavy focus on the spiritual, with less concern for conditions that oppressed the Congolese people, and a reluctance to trust the Congolese church with financial management.

However, Komuesa also acknowledged with gratitude these same missionaries, hundreds of them, who were faithful to God's call to share the good news of Jesus—braving sickness, a harsh climate, difficult living conditions and political instability. Komuesa asked the gathered assembly to stand for a moment of silence to remember all the Mennonites who sacrificed their lives in obedience to Christ's call.

In his concluding address, Komuesa said, "I salute those missionaries who gave of their youth and their lives for our country. I also render homage to their descendants who are still laboring for the welfare of our church. Let all of them know how grateful we are."

Missionary accomplishments were only possible because Congolese people worked hand-in-hand with their brothers and sisters from North America, Komuesa said, offering congratulations to his church for its solidarity.

Today, CMCO is a member of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, which brings together eight partners, including Mennonite Mission Network.

Approximately 400 participants gathered for the final worship service on July 22. Many of them held candles lighted in celebration of CMCO's birthday.

"Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in the second century that begins today, take care of our church," was Komuesa's birthday wish, as the candles were extinguished as a symbol of the end of CMCO's first centennial anniversary.

During the week-long celebration, CMCO's story was communicated in many forms—through original songs in the tradition of griots (singer-historians), through a book of short biographies of early Congolese Mennonites, through a PowerPoint program presented by François Tshidimu Mukendi, Mennonite pastor and historian, and through many examples in sermons and testimonies.

Today, although some of the mission station buildings have crumbled into disrepair, the church has thrived, growing to include 110,000 members, 798 congregations, 95 schools and seven hospitals, according to a conference given by Anastasie Tshimbila, a professor at the Mennonite Bible institute in Kalonda, about five miles from Tshikapa.

The most passionate debate at the celebration centered on the decision to ordain women. Of the three Mennonite denominations in Congo, CMCO is the only one still denying ordination to women. La Communauté des Frères Mennonites au Congo (the Mennonite Brethren Church) ordained its first woman pastor in 2000. Communauté Evangélique Mennonite (the Evangelical Mennonite Church) was preparing to ordain its first woman pastor a few days after the end of CMCO's centennial celebration.

Komuesa was given the mandate for his second six-year term as CMCO president just hours before the centennial festivities began, as the annual general assembly concluded around 2 a.m. on July 15.

Among Komuesa's accomplishments in his first tenure was the construction of a welcome center, which includes a large conference room, a dining room and kitchen, and three dormitory blocks. The new facilities enabled CMCO to receive 30 delegates from three continents representing eight Mennonite agencies. Because the center is within walking distance from the airport, CMCO hopes it can be used as a guest house to generate income for the church.

The welcome center was a collaborative effort that included Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, CMCO, building teams from Mennonite Church USA congregations and Arnold Harder, who traveled to Congo four times for a total of six months of volunteer service to facilitate the construction process.

Rod Hollinger-Janzen, executive coordinator of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, coordinated the international component of the Congolese anniversary event. He says the experience communicated how profound relationships within the body of Christ can be. He was moved by the affirmation that choirs from different ethnic groups—Tshokwe, Lulua and Pende—gave each other. People who had been feuding a few decades ago were now singing about being brothers and sisters.

"This was one way the centennial celebration became an avenue for CMCO members to reaffirm their unity in Christ and accept their ethnic diversity as a positive and creative reality," Hollinger-Janzen says. "Our international delegation was also told in many different ways how important it was that we had come."

Hollinger-Janzen says that CMCO leaders and members repeatedly expressed the desire to continue to nurture fraternal relationships and to partner with the church conferences and agencies which had worked together to plant Mennonite churches in Congo.—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen for Meetinghouse, a consortium of Anabaptist publications*

Congolese soccer and song

When a Belgian school inspector needed to recruit singers for the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, he entrusted the task to two missionary women, one of whom was Lodema Short. Short served from 1947 to 1981 with Congo Inland Mission, now Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, a partner agency with Mennonite Mission Network. Her musical abilities, her organizational skills and her relationships with hundreds of students enabled her to choose and then chaperone the nine young men who performed as the Happy Singers in Belgium.

A nephew, Dwight Short of Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Fla., joined the AIMM delegation that traveled to Congo July 12-29, primarily because he wanted to learn more about his famous aunt. Dwight Short was able to videotape 27 interviews, four with Happy Singer members, in addition to having conversations with many of Lodema Short's students, many of whom are pastors. The current principal of Lycée Miodi, Bernadette Manya Kikungo, was one of Lodema Short's students.

"Mama Kanamu [Lodema Short's African name, meaning "Trustworthy"] worked hard here at the school to train church leaders," says Manya Kikungo. "Even the president of our church [Komuesa] was one of her students."

Dwight Short has another passion—evangelism through sports. Although the equipment he packed was bogged down by slow shipping throughout his entire stay in Congo, the four soccer balls brought by other delegation members attracted about 400 kids for a soccer clinic in Tshikapa. He worked with Robert Irundu Mutundu, the National President of Mennonite Youth in Congo.—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen*

Trisha Handrich

Robert Irundu Mutundu, national youth president for Communauté Mennonite au Congo-CMCO (far left), and Dwight Short (right) plan for future evangelism and sports clinics.

Lanctot encourages Congolese women leaders

Pastor invited to be first American woman to preach to Congo churches

June Mears Driedger

Nina B. Lanctot preaching at the Bondeko Mennonite Church in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, on May 6.

When Nina B. Lanctot first met Congolese pastor Francois Tshidimu, he said to her, "We want you to come to Kinshasa to visit. You are a preacher. You will preach."

He asked her to preach about what it means to be Anabaptist. Lanctot, who wasn't planning on traveling to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), took this as a possible sign from God.

Lanctot is pastor of Florence Church of the Brethren Mennonite in Constantine, Mich. Tim and Suzanne Lind, Mennonite Central Committee DRC country co-directors, are in her congregation. Additionally, another church member, Christine Nofsinger, gave birth to the vision for the Congo Cloth Connection. Lanctot began preparing to visit the DRC as an extension of the Congo Cloth Connection in May.

Lanctot traveled with two other women, Nancy Myers of Buchanan, Mich., and June Mears Driedger of Lansing, Mich. Although the original purpose of the trip was to strengthen relationships, with a particular focus on cloth and sewing, the emerging purpose became encouraging the Congolese women, particularly those women in ministerial leadership.

For Tshidimu, having Lanctot visit and preach both in his congregation and a larger worship service for Mennonites in Kinshasa was part of a threefold plan: "First, this was two different cultures meeting—Congolese and American," Tshidimu says. "Second, this would be the first time an American Mennonite woman would be preaching to Congolese Mennonite congregations. And third, this would be an encouragement for the Congolese women."

Indeed, Lanctot encouraged many of the women, including a meeting with Congolese women theologians and pastoral hopefuls. She listened to the hopes and laments of women eager and anxious to use their pastoral gifts and be ordained. Also, Lanctot laid hands and blessed Mimi Kanku, the first woman to be ordained by her Mennonite conference.

In her sermon to the Bondeko Mennonite Church, Lanctot focused on what it is to be Anabaptist with an emphasis on peacemaking. She described peacemaking as shaking hands, which she demonstrated with the translator.

"I greet you with my one hand," she said as she extended her right hand to the translator, "I offer you total respect, no matter who you are. But with my other hand I say, 'I will be at peace with you but you cannot harm me.' " She held up her left other hand as a stop sign, a boundary marker.

The women in the congregation nodded in agreement with Lanctot. But it wasn't until the following Thursday during a women's Bible study that she understood how much the women understood and agreed.

Maman Michoux, a Bible teacher, taught from 1 John 4 regarding perfect love casting out all fear. Then she emphasized that if we have perfect love we don't mistreat one another or allow ourselves to be mistreated.

She continued to paraphrase Lanctot's sermon from the previous Sunday, particularly about setting boundaries in love relationships.

"In a culture challenged by violence against women, as we are, there was great solidarity in this sermon," Lanctot says. "It is no accident that the congregation's name, Bondeko, means solidarity."

In her second sermon, Lanctot focused on what she learned about Anabaptism from the Congolese Mennonites. Again, she used down-to-earth examples that reflected the realities of life in Kinshasa: "You have a strong gift of peacemaking in your hospitality. Each household, from the richest to the poorest, served us rice, fufu, fish, chicken and fried bananas and kept saying, 'Eat, eat.' "

The women cheered.

"I had to keep remembering to preach to everyone. It was so easy to keep looking at the women, sitting together, shouting and beaming at me," Lanctot says.

Pastor Tshidimu sums up his purpose for Lanctot's visit as a need to change expectations.

"We needed someone from the outside to shake things up, which Pastor Nina did. The Holy Spirit is with Pastor Nina," he says while smiling.—*June Mears Driedger, managing editor of* Leader *magazine*

Geiser remembered at Kidron Church

More than 500 people gather to honor the life of service worker in Afghanistan.

Friends and family gathered Aug. 5 for a memorial service for Alfred Geiser at Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church. More than 500 people attended the service.

Black and white photos of Geiser as a child, family photos and snapshots of the recent work projects of Engineering Associates scrolled across the screen at the podium. Images from the burial in Afghanistan—a beautiful floral wreath, the simple wooden casket covered in red rose petals, friends and colleagues gathered in prayer, the first shovelfuls of dirt on the grave—were also projected.

Al Geiser

Ruth Steiner, a sister of Geiser, shared that his commitment to his work in Afghanistan was rooted in a call he experienced from God. She and a church friend, Steve Steiner, shared in summarizing his life and work, which came to an end on July 22, when he, his business partner and another co-worker were shot and killed while traveling to do a repair-work job in the Parwan province in Afghanistan.

Al had been working in the region in a variety of capacities for more than a decade, beginning in 2000, through partnership with Mennonite Mission Network in an appointment with Gladys, his wife. Most recently he was involved in transforming rural life for Afghan villagers through providing electricity, working alongside the local people. To date, their private company, which made turbines, pipes and parts needed to provide hydroelectric power, had brought electricity to more than 100 villages.

Gladys offered the comments she had shared at the burial service. Using stories from their life and focusing on their call to ministry in Afghanistan, she shared special memories and dreams she shared with her husband of 35 years. She described Geiser as a man with an independent spirit and a deep faith, a patient listener and encourager. "I don't know why God allowed this to happen," she said. "I will miss you, Al, and I will remember."

Skills taught, time spent and a shared love of international travel and experiences are some of the treasured memories that Franklin and Andrea, Al and Gladys' children, shared. Friends Doug and Laura Snyder, who lived and worked alongside the Geisers in Kabul, testified to Geiser's love for the work, challenges and the people of Afghanistan. Affectionately referring to Geiser as "crusty," they reflected on ways God had specially equipped Al for his "tireless, sacrificial service."

Using Hebrews 11, Rod and Lucy Lehman reflected on their friendship with Al and Gladys and the impact of the Geisers' ministry. Rod thanked Franklin and Andrea for releasing their parents to follow God's call, allowing their family to be used for kingdom purposes.

Pastor Carl Wiebe focused his comments on Scriptures that were significant to Al. Highlighting God's provision for service, the picture of service and the purpose of bringing the kingdom, Wiebe wove together ideas and images from Psalm 23, Luke 10 and Matthew 6. In particular, he noted the story of the Good Samaritan, one Al referenced when sharing about his faith.

The Lord's Prayer had special significance for Geiser, said Wiebe, as it was one he often recited during his kidnapping. Geiser had shared that repeating the prayer had brought him much comfort in his times of uncertainty. In August 2008, Geiser and his partner were taken while returning home from attending a funeral. His partner was released after a week, but Geiser was held captive for 56 days before being rescued. Despite the experience, Geiser felt called to continue the work he had been involved with for more than a decade. For the past four years, he had alternated, working six months in Kabul and six months in the United States.—*Sherah-Leigh Gerber for* The Mennonite

MMN family grieves Geiser's death

Al Geiser and Gladys, his wife, served with Mennonite Mission Network in Afghanistan from 2000 to 2009. In their assignments, Al built small water turbines to bring electricity to rural villages, and Gladys taught elementary students in an international school. Al survived a 2008 kidnapping in which he was held by militants for 56 days. After being safely reunited with his family, he and Gladys returned to Afghanistan independently. Stanley W. Green, Mission Network executive director, offered his sympathies to the family and to members of Kidron Mennonite Church, the Geisers' longtime home church and devoted financial sponsor.

"We at Mennonite Mission Network are saddened by the death of Al Geiser," Green said in a statement. "Al was a member of our Mission Network family for many years. We mourn the loss of one committed to sharing God's love, building peace and serving others. We grieve for the Geiser family and for the family of Al's friend and business partner, Shukur. May this be a time for family, friends and community to both grieve their loss and celebrate their lives."—*Mennonite Mission Network staff*

12 Scriptures Project engages churches

What if each household came up with their top 12 Scriptures for Christian living?

Cincinnati (Ohio) Mennonite Fellowship (CMF) was one of the first congregations to engage the 12 Scriptures Project. The project was introduced in the March issue of Mennonite Church USA's online newsletter, *On the Way*. It invites congregations to identify their 12 most important Scripture texts.

Keith Lehman, a member of CMF's worship committee, says that the congregation's leaders didn't want the discernment process to be heavy.

"This seemed like a way to have some fun thinking about our community and about Scripture," he says.

The congregation began by gathering lists of 12 Scriptures from individuals and households; the congregation's 12 Scriptures were then discerned during the Christian education hour.

"Most of the work was done by our adult forum Sunday school class in cooperation with our junior high Sunday school class (about five kids)," Lehman says. "It was wonderfully informal, with the young people participating actively in small group discussions and adding Scriptures to our timeline."

CMF then designed its summer worship series to focus on the 12 Scriptures, one per week, says Joel Miller, CMF's pastor.

"Along with worship themes and sermons, we invited one person per week who had chosen that particular Scripture to share why the passage was significant for him or her or why it mattered to CMF," he says. "The hope was that this could be a way for us to engage the Bible together and come to a better understanding of what we hold as most valuable."

The 12 Scriptures Project came about after participants in Mennonite Church USA's delegate assembly at Pittsburgh 2011 adopted Christian formation as one of seven churchwide priorities. This priority calls for the church "to increase our capacity as a community of faith to use the Scriptures as a faithful guide for daily living."

"There were steady calls from congregations and conferences asking what we were going to do with the emphasis on Scripture and when they could expect study materials," says Terry Shue, director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA.

So Shue organized an ad hoc "Bible dream team" of people with great passion for the Bible. The team brainstormed ideas to help congregations use the Bible more significantly in their congregational life. One idea rose to the top: Inspire each congregation to engage in a process to identify the 12 most important Scripture texts or stories for their congregation and answer the question, "Why that one?"

The team developed a four-step process that congregations can use in small groups or Sunday school classes.

12 Scriptures project

A men's Bible study based at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., and made up of men from various Mennonite as well as other-than-Mennonite congregations, also was quick to take on the project.

Pastor Phil Kniss says they adapted the process for their table groups, and the men participated "with much enthusiasm and lively conversation." The group plans to study one of the 12 Scriptures together each week in the fall, inviting one person per week to share how that Scripture has been important and formative.

At Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakewood, Colo., member Rhoda Miller Blough says she was "taken aback" by her small group's experience of the 12 Scriptures Project.

"It was so much more than I had expected," she says, explaining that each of the group members—including two girls—brought 12 Scriptures to the meeting. "As we shared about our choices, I found it to be a bonding experience." She adds that many in the group shared verses that were important to their parents.

Blough serves as moderator for Mountain States Mennonite Conference, and participants in the conference's annual gathering in August were introduced to the project as well.

Also, participants in the annual meeting of North Central Conference in June had a "very positive experience" with their introduction to the project, according to conference minister Fred Kanagy. "We are interested as a conference in promoting this intentional pursuit into God's Word," he says. "The Bible is held high here in the NCC, and this emphasis into the inspired Scriptures encourages us as to the future direction of Mennonite Church USA."

To learn more or to post your 12 Scriptures, see http://mennoniteusa.org/2012/03/06/engaging-the-12-scriptures-project/.—*Cindy Snider for Mennonite Church USA*

Dumpsters and peace vigils new way of life

Service Adventure participant from Germany creates a 'simple-living' internship.

On a 95-degree day in Albuquerque, N.M., in mid-July, a grizzled peace activist and a fresh-faced novice protester stand in the sun with an eight-foot-high banner, hoping to shut down the Sandia Nuclear Labs.

A massive pickup barrels down Eubank Avenue past them, leaving a trail of thick, black smoke.

"That's one of my friends," the older activist, Chuck Hosking, says, a sarcastic smile on his face. The driver engulfs Hosking in a cloud of exhaust every Friday to register his opposition to Hosking's peace vigil. It's one of the many stories Hosking has from his 30 years of standing vigil outside the labs every Friday from 3:30 to 5 p.m.

His 20-year-old companion, Melanie Pilz, isn't fazed. A native of Germany, Pilz finished a year of volunteering with Service Adventure, a yearlong Mennonite Mission Network program for young adults. Inspired by her service term, she stayed an extra month to learn from Hosking's minimalist lifestyle. In addition to the Friday afternoon peace vigil, she sits with him while he washes his clothes in a bucket, saving the water to irrigate his vegetable garden, helps him dig through dumpsters to find perfectly edible food that has been thrown out and asks him questions about his faith and his many years fighting for global equity alongside his late wife, Mary Ann Fiske.

The idea for the internship was sparked when Hosking, a longtime attender of Albuquerque Mennonite Church, spoke with the Service Adventure unit earlier in the year. Pilz was intrigued by his life's goal of fighting for global equity and demilitarization and his commitment to live on as little as possible and give away anything extra he earns working at a local college.

"One thing I was really impressed by was that Chuck was living on about $1,800 a year," Pilz says. "That's less than some people earn in a month, and he's living on that for a whole year."

When Pilz approached Hosking with the idea of a simple-living internship, he was surprised but readily agreed. "I told her from the beginning this is going to be a student-driven internship," Hosking says. "I have no syllabus; I have nothing to say to you. It's all going to be your questions."

Shadowing Hosking has forced Pilz to expand her comfort zone. At her first Friday peace vigil, they were confronted by a passerby who threatened to come back and beat them up. She was also nervous she would be caught during her first time rummaging through a dumpster. But a few weeks into the internship she chose to continue plugging away, driven by a desire to live out the values she professes.

The internship came at a time when Pilz was trying to discern what she wanted to do with her life, she says. In addition to interning with Hosking, she also spends two mornings a week delivering mail to homeless men and women at St. Martin's Hospitality Center, one morning working with children at the University of New Mexico children's psychiatric hospital, and four afternoons a week teaching kids Bible stories at an agency called East Central Ministries.

When she returns to Germany, she will start a six-week internship at a hospital, determining whether she wants to study nursing. She also plans to be baptized.

Pilz says her personal transformation has been influenced by the people at Albuquerque Mennonite Church, the congregation that sponsors the Service Adventure unit.

"I saw a lot of ways [they live] out their faith," she says, "but what was outstanding for me here was especially the hospitality of the people."

Hosking says he has been inspired by Melanie's earnestness.

"She's someone who takes her faith seriously and wants to apply it to her everyday life," he says.

Back out in the sun, Hosking gives Pilz his most important piece of advice. "Really grapple with what your faith values are and discern your life purpose, and try to do that before finding a life partner and before deciding on a career."

While Pilz is not sure she's discovered that purpose, she has a better grip on how to live out her faith.

"The idea of going out to serve God just makes sense," she says. "It seems right to try to follow Jesus actively with your life. It's about being conscious about how you live and what choices you make."—*Andrew Clouse of Mennonite Mission Network*

Should We F
God's Universe
with Weapons?
ABQ Peace Values Proj

Andrew Clouse

Chuck Hosking and Melanie Pilz, a former Service Adventure volunteer, outside Sandia National Laboratories in mid-July

Savoring the present

Family practice physician in Goshen faces early-onset Alzheimer's

Bryan Yoder Schlabach

Mary and Mike Lehman Yoder hold their new twin grandchildren in August in Albuquerque, N.M.

When Mike and Mary Lehman Yoder of Goshen, Ind., realized that Mike was experiencing early symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, fear of the unknown was one struggle they did not have to face.

Years before, they had accompanied first Mary's and later Mike's parents as their fathers lived with Alzheimer's and eventually died with the disease.

Mike's many years as a physician in family practice, and Mary's as a Mennonite pastor, have added to their familiarity with Alzheimer's and its impact on individuals and their families.

This familiarity has lessened the shock of a diagnosis and opened channels for God's grace to reshape their lives while accommodating the presence of this illness.

Both are grateful for the gift of early retirement that gives them treasured time together. The 2010 addition of early-onset Alzheimer's disease to a list of expedited disabilities put Mike on a fast track to receiving benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance, which he has appreciated.

"I certainly miss the relationships I had at the office," Mike says. After 25 years of practicing medicine in Goshen, giving up the daily contact with colleagues has been a major loss. In day-to-day life, Mike finds his biggest frustration to be a loss of short-term memory.

"It can be gone if I turn around," he says.

Some months after Mike retired, Mary, too, took early retirement from her position as pastor at Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen.

"I did not stop working to take care of Mike; I wanted more time to be together," Mary says. "Caregiving will come later, but it's not here now."

The couple now has time for simple pleasures, cooking together, for example.

"We still cook together as we always have," Mary says. "We just do it differently." Mary takes care of checking the sequence of the recipe, and Mike finds other ways to assist.

Mike and Mary give thanks for God's grace provided through a support group from Assembly Mennonite. The group meets with them regularly over shared meals. Mary says that God is also present to them in the gift of attention to the present.

"This is an illness where, over time, you become present to the moment," she says. "The past slips away, and we've found it's not useful to anticipate the future. Nobody wants to learn being present to the moment through an illness like this, but it gives you that opportunity if you can receive it."

When asked how his illness has affected his relationship with God, Mike says, "I don't feel it's a punishment."

On the contrary, Mary adds, picking up on Mike's thought, "Why should we be gifted with such a wonderful life, so many resources and such a supportive congregation?"

Mike says,"It's a medical question and not a theological crisis. My father and two of his brothers developed dementia as well. I'm working to accept what my genes have given me."

Mary encourages those who want to be supportive of people affected by dementia to speak to the affected person, not just to the spouse. When people who are uncomfortable with the diagnosis avoid talking to the affected person directly, it leads a person to feel invisible. Mike adds that it is always better to ask questions rather than hang back in fear of saying the wrong thing.

Music has always been a big part of the couple's life and faith, and they look for it to remain a blessing. They continue to find joy in attending live musical performances together. Assembly Mennonite welcomes Mike's musical gifts. Simple adaptations accommodate his disability and smooth the way for his ongoing role as a song leader.

Another musician gives the starting pitch and calls out the number of the second song any time he leads two in a row. Mike finds regular get-togethers with another couple for singing familiar hymns a meaningful spiritual practice he shares with Mary.

"The words of a rich variety of hymns sustain us and feed our souls," Mary says.—*Christine Guth, ADNet program director. This article was reprinted with permission from the July issue of* Connections, *the newsletter of Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet), www.adnetonline.org.*

Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship broadens vision

MHF is the union of Mennonite Medical and Mennonite Nurses Associations.

More than 100 members of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF) gathered at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., earlier this summer for the organization's annual convention retreat, the first such gathering of the newly formed organization of health-care professionals, a union between Mennonite Medical Association and Mennonite Nurses Association that was consummated last summer at Laurelville.

The MHF convention retreat affirmed the broad spectrum of health care suggested by last year's merger, placing significant emphasis on integrated approaches to care.

The weekend's content was highlighted by leading health-care professionals such as Doug Schwartzentruber, system medical director of Indiana University Health Cancer Services; Jane Hiebert-White, Health Affairs executive publisher; and Joseph Martin, former Harvard Medical School dean. Schwartzentruber was named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People in the World" for his work in cancer research in 2010.

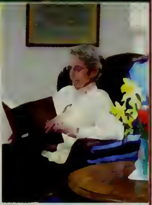
A variety of workshops and panel discussions undergirded the retreat's focus on integrated health care.

"We have an even broader vision now," said Jone Friesen, a medical professional from Tulsa, Okla., who specializes in integrative health and wellness and is formerly a member of Mennonite Nurses Association.

The faith component of MHF is clearly a distinctive that drives the organization. "We are creatures of body, mind, spirit, soul," said Jim Leaman, lead chaplain at Landis Homes, a retirement community in Lititz, Pa. Leaman served as a panelist during an interdisciplinary discussion on health care and offered the meditation during a worship.

Mennonites seem well-suited to advocating for integrated, holistic care. "I think Anabaptist health-care workers share a certain set of values with regard to health care that include attention to the way individuals deserve attention and care and the kind of care they get—compassionate care," said Stan Reedy, a health-care professional specializing in public health policy and preventive medicine and a member of MMA for 30 years prior to the formation of MHF.

Next year's retreat is scheduled for June 21-23, 2013, at Goshen (Ind.) College.—*Brian Paff for Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship*



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El Centro discovers kindred spirit

Spanish-speaking church joins Mountain States Mennonite Conference.

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Ken Gingerich

Representatives of El Centro (front row), are surrounded by Mountain State Mennonite Conference leadership board members during a welcoming celebration at the conference's annual assembly on Aug. 5. Jaime and Patricia Lázaro are in the front row, far left.

When the Mountain States Mennonite Conference assembly concluded on Aug. 5, the conference had grown more culturally diverse and a tiny bit better at Salsa dancing. The dancing was part of a welcoming celebration for El Centro, which became the first Spanish-speaking congregation in the Mountain States Conference region in nearly half a century.

The last Spanish-language services were held at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in the town of La Junta, Colo., which was also the site of this year's assembly.

Emmanuel had been established as a Spanish-language congregation in the 1930s but gradually began using the language and forms of the English-speaking Mennonite community as more and more Anglos began attending in the 1950s. The last complete service in Spanish was held in 1963, although worship elements in Spanish were incorporated well into the 1970s.

At First Mennonite Church of Denver, John Ventura provided leadership for Spanish-language services between 1962 and 1968. A Spanish-speaking church plant in Carlsbad, N.M., in the 1960s eventually became an independent congregation.

"But this time around," said Herm Weaver, conference minister, "we hope we have a better understanding of how to be true sisters and brothers in every sense of the word."

El Centro began as a call to Jaime and Patricia Lázaro and their children Caleb, Daniela and Myriam when they were living in Los Angeles four years ago.

"We don't know why we were compelled to come to Colorado Springs, but this is where God led us," said Jaime. The Lázaros had emigrated from Peru more than a dozen years previously and through the long difficult process of U.S. naturalization found that the gifts of the immigrant community had become a passion—and the building blocks for the new congregation.

But there was sometimes a feeling of isolation and anxiety for some who were undocumented. When son Caleb returned from a conference on creativity at First Mennonite Church of Denver, he'd made friends with several Mennonites—Tory Doerkson and Dayvid Graybill. Soon the friendship blossomed into lively conversations about justice, peace and what it means to follow Jesus in the American empire.

The conversation expanded to include leadership at El Centro and Beth-El Mennonite Church in Colorado Springs. With the encouragement of the conference's SEED Project (a group commissioned to pay attention to bubbles of vitality and growth across the conference), the relationship developed into an invitation to El Centro to use the recently constructed Beth-El facility for its worship services. About 60 people from El Centro now gather in the Beth-El sanctuary for worship on Sunday afternoons.

"As we learned to know about Mennonites, it wasn't what we thought it would be," said Jaime. "We actually found a spiritual community that thinks like us."

"We are so blessed to have you join with us," said Weaver. "This has all come about as the result of opening ourselves up to new relationships. It hasn't been forced or compulsive. It is simply a gift from God."—*Ken Gingerich for MSMC*

More than 1,500 visit Global Fair

Eastern Mennonite Missions event offers food from all around the world.

Well, it's not a 'binge food' like baklava," laughed Barry Freed at Eastern Mennonite Missions' (EMM) Global Fair on July 21 at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School.

"We won't get a line," he said. "But saltibarsciai [cold beet soup] is refreshing on a hot summer day."

Freed was assisting Sharon and Gregg Brubaker, EMM workers in Lithuania, at their booth in the Europe section of Global Fair. Freed had served with EMM in Lithuania for five and a half years.

Janelle Burkholder, a Missionary Support Team (MST) member for the Brubakers, said, "The kefir is selling quite well. It's a yogurt drink, a little like a smoothie."

More than 1,500 visitors enjoyed the missions and culture festival representing EMM's work around the globe. Divided into regions of the world, EMM workers as well as local churches and groups shared artifacts, foods, crafts and activities representing their work or cultures.

Next door to the Lithuania display, baklava sold briskly—along with samples of Turkish coffee. Those proceeds supported work of Kostika and Origena Zguri, EMM appointees who will be heading to Albania in the summer of 2014. The Zguris hope to begin a dairy processing project.

Khanthaly Bounma, from Harrisburg (Pa.) Laos Fellowship, offered attendees a free taste of khao lam (sticky rice with black and yellow beans formed in a bamboo stick.)

"People are really enjoying this," said Bounma.

In the Africa section, fairgoers were offered samples of mango and wonjo juices, drinks popular in The Gambia.

Near The Gambia exhibit, children at the Ghana exhibit learned how to carry a baby on their back, transport something on their head or play a game consisting of bottle caps. EMM worker J.C. Ebersole just finished his on-field assignment in Ghana and had been back in the United States only four days.

Children participated in a variety of free activities and crafts. Three young alpacas gently befriended the young visitors. Children also tried grinding corn by hand, jumping in a bouncy castle or feeling the cool water at a Mennonite Central Committee sand dam display. Others painted terracotta pots, made tiger puppets or created coffee bean people.
—Linda Moffett of Eastern Mennonite Missions

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Tammy Evans

Izak Okanya checks out Rosie the alpaca, along with his brother Barak and mother Jessica, family of Eastern Mennonite Missions President Nelson Okanya.

Consultation held for new *Martyrs Mirror*

Plans for changes by 2025—the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement

More than 35 people from seven countries gathered Aug. 5-8 at Goshen (Ind.) College for an international consultation on the theme "Bearing Witness: A New Martyrs Mirror for the 21st Century?" Hosted by the college's Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism, the international gathering explored the possibility of a major story-gathering initiative, focused especially on the theme of "costly discipleship."

According to John D. Roth, conference organizer and Goshen College professor of history, Anabaptist-Mennonite groups have had a long tradition of storytelling, particularly stories of those who have suffered or died because of their convictions. In 1562, Anabaptists in the Netherlands secretly published a collection of martyr stories known as *Het Offer des Herren* (*Sacrifice Unto the Lord*). The book appeared in many subsequent editions, culminating in 1685 with an expanded version of stories called the *Martyrs Mirror*. The *Martyrs Mirror* is a richly illustrated collection of narratives, hymns, confessions and devotional reflections with the theme of suffering for their faith.

After 1685, no further expansions of the book have been published, even though many Anabaptist groups continued to suffer for their faith. Suffering continues today, including in places that the church has expanded internationally, such as Indonesia, India, Zimbabwe, Congo and Colombia.

Roth invited scholars and church leaders from a wide range of groups to discuss the possibility of gathering stories of costly discipleship. He described three main reasons for the consultation.

"First, we hope that the project might encourage deeper faithfulness to Jesus among all those who encounter the stories," he said. "Second, the project should strengthen relationships within and beyond the global Anabaptist church. Finally, we think it is important to stand in solidarity with those who have suffered for their faith, particularly the vulnerable and the voiceless who are easily forgotten in history."

Participants in the consultation affirmed the project, encouraging Roth and Gerald Mast, co-moderator and Bluffton (Ohio) University professor of communication, to cultivate a broad base of support for the research and gathering phase. The group also identified several important challenges that will need to be addressed as the project continues.

"There can be a danger," said Jack Suderman, former General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, "of speaking about victimization from a perspective of power or that we use the suffering of others to bolster our own positions."

Other participants noted the logistical and practical challenges of gathering stories from a global body numbering 1.7 million members. Participants also wrestled with the question of who "qualifies" for inclusion in the project.

Some argued for narrow definitions—focusing the initiative only on individuals from Anabaptist groups who had died for their faith. The majority favored a broader scope that would include some stories of nonresistant Christians outside the Anabaptist tradition, as well as those whose suffering did not necessarily result in death. Roth noted that the title of the consultation, "Bearing Witness," was an effort to shift the focus from physical suffering to the deeper reasons behind the suffering.

"Originally, the word 'martyr' simply meant 'witness,'" he said. "This project should not be seen as an attempt to make a fetish out of torture, suffering or victimhood. Rather, we are trying to encourage the church to continue to 'bear witness' to the faith, even if it should entail great cost."

A highpoint of the consultation came on Aug. 7, when various participants shared stories from their own experience in Ethiopia, the former Soviet Union and Colombia.

When the members of the consultation listened to these stories, Mast said, "we became spiritually united as brothers and sisters in Christ. This experience of growing spiritual closeness convinced me that gathering and sharing stories of costly witness in the coming years will strengthen relationships throughout the global Anabaptist family of faith."

Gathering these and other stories, Roth said, "will require an enormous amount of work along with great sensitivity and care." But he and Mast are optimistic about the future and hope to continue moving the project forward.

Although the ultimate outcome of the "Bearing Witness" initiative has not been defined, Roth hopes to make significant progress by 2025, which marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Anabaptist movement.—*Kaeli Evans*

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MCC material resources reach Syrian refugees

Mennonite Central Committee ships 3,447 relief kits and 14,220 hygiene kits.

Caritas Jordan Photo/Laura Sheahen

Laith Bisharat, supervisor for the Caritas Jordan center in Zarqa, Jordan, distributes blankets made by MCC supporters.

As the violent conflict in Syria escalates, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) intensifies its efforts to help those affected. Four material resources shipments from Canada and the United States have reached the area for Syrian refugees and the communities hosting them.

To date, MCC has shipped 3,447 relief kits, 14,220 hygiene kits, 13,666 blankets, 17,160 school kits and 288 infant care kits to Jordan and Lebanon.

The number of Syrians entering Jordan each day has increased to as many as 2,000, according to MCC partner organization Caritas Jordan.

MCC's response also includes distribution of food, medicine and fuel in the Syrian cities of Homs and Damascus and increased support for disaster preparedness and conflict prevention activities in Lebanon, where there is tension and potential for the violence to spread.

MCC encourages donations of money (specify "Middle East crisis"; mcc.org/middleeastcrisis) and relief kits (information available from your nearest MCC office or mcc.org/kits/relief).—*Mennonite Central Committee*

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Serving veterans in VA hospitals

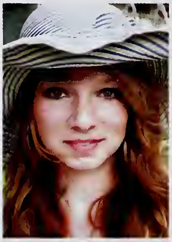
For many Mennonites, military service remains off their radar. Few veterans attend Mennonite churches or Mennonite colleges. Due to the dwindling number of those enlisted—less than 1 percent of the U.S. population serves in the military, according to an NPR report—it may be even easier to avoid these individuals.

However, this relatively small number of people face big problems. Each day about 18 veterans commit suicide. About one-quarter of returning veterans meet criteria for a mental health disorder. Many face unemployment, divorce, substance abuse and more.

Mennonites' peace position complicates interactions and relationships with veterans. However, some Mennonites refuse to shy away from these difficult dynamics and actually work in a variety of positions at Veterans Health Administration (VA) hospitals all over the country.

As Andrea Wetherald, 24, says, "Jesus set an example of dangerous love."

Wetherald administers the intervention for a smoking cessation research study at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and attends Pittsburgh Mennonite Church.



Andrea Wetherald

"Being a Mennonite at the VA has offered many opportunities for me to replace judgment with love," she says.

Wetherald says there is no stereotype that will fit all veterans or one certain "type of person" who enlists in the military.

"I have met several [Muslim] veterans, transgendered veterans, many wealthy and educated veterans and even some pacifist veterans," she says. "I have met veterans who are software engineers and nature-loving artists."

"The best thing Mennonites can do is look through the stereotypes and see an individual—as cliché as it may sound," she says.

Bernie Good, 55, also of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church, has worked in the VA system since 1986. Good says he balances the tension between the system of the U.S. military and the individuals that serve in the system.

While he can't celebrate the military complex, he can celebrate and support the people, says Good, chief of the section of general internal medicine.

Bernie Good

"I do celebrate the VA, for many reasons unrelated to the military," says Good.

He says the VA takes on military sexual abuse, offers substance abuse programs, reaches out to the homeless, provides low-cost or free health care to many who are dispossessed and more.

As a conscientious objector, Good struggled with taking a first job at the VA in Pittsburgh after his medical residency. However, after many conversations with his spouse, pastor and church members, he came to a place of certainty. He sent a letter to his church explaining his rationale, and the church affirmed his decision.

While some of the patients Good interacts with express patriotic, pro-military sentiments, many do not. One World War II veteran Good befriended told him that right after his marriage, he volunteered to serve. After landing in the South Pacific, he immediately began dodging bullets, and the reality of war hit him. Over the years, his beliefs evolved into pacifism.

"There are a surprising number of veterans who are proud of their service, but they've come to question war," he says.

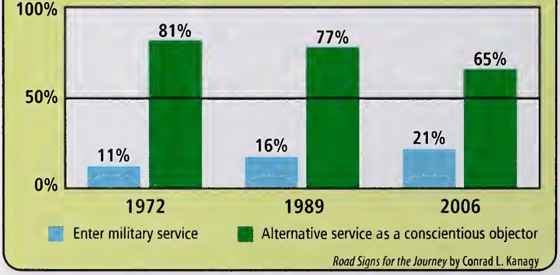
Good says he is helping heal the wounds of those who have been affected by war.

"Although I cannot support the war effort, I am comfortable working with those who have volunteered for an activity I am unwilling to do."

Like Good, Robert Martin of Lancaster, Pa., a primary care provider, faced a tension between his Anabaptist peace position and his former work in serving veterans.

Until 2011, Martin spent about three months working as a physician at each of the following VA clinic locations: Silver City, N.M.; Bangor, Maine; Gallup, N.M., and Asheville, N.C.

Responses of Mennonites if faced with a military draft



Road Signs for the Journey by Conrad L. Kanagy

Robert Martin

During these years, Martin sought the counsel of friends and those in his congregation, East Chestnut Street Mennonite, Lancaster. Last year he went to breakfast with Titus Peachey of Mennonite Central Committee and long-time peace advocate, to discuss his work in the VA system. "There was a time when I thought that to work in the VA system meant to endorse war, but I've come to see that is not the case," he says. "I feel a sense that God brought me there. I want to see each person as made in his image."

While in Asheville, Martin learned that a Mennonite church regularly brought home-baked desserts to a facility for homeless veterans and visited with and supported the veterans.

"One needs to be nonjudgmental, but we don't need to be apologetic about our position," he says. "My experience of working in Israel for 18 years and experiencing three wars—in 1967, 1973 and 1991—gives me a background to discuss and share with veterans my peace convictions."

Wade Ebersole, 33, wanted a position in a "closed socialized system that served a complex and often indigent population." Ebersole is senior staff assistant to the director at the VA San Diego Healthcare System.

Wade Ebersole

The mission-driven aspects of the organization impressed him, as well as the culture of service apparent among many of the professional staff.

"Many people who choose to work at the VA could be making more money elsewhere," he says.

Ebersole describes the veterans he knows as "compassionate, passionate and generous."

"The majority of my conversations with veterans about their service glorified the diplomatic portions of their jobs and the community and camaraderie that existed during their service," Ebersole says.

Moreover, Rodney Deaton says no one likes war except the "powerful who benefit from it."

Deaton is a psychiatrist who serves at the Richard L. Roudebush Veterans Administration Medical Center in Indianapolis and a member at First Mennonite Church of Indianapolis.

"Mennonites believe that we protect society in the long run when we avoid violence and seek peaceful solutions," he says. "Combat veterans believe ... that they protect society in the short run when they must use violence purposely—so that everybody, including Mennonites, can have a long run at all."

However, Deaton says, he believes that Mennonites who "live on the grid" must face the facts. "If we still have central air and the audacity to darken the door of a Starbucks, we owe our easy access to those amenities to many combat veterans," he says.

Deaton says he hopes that Mennonites open themselves up to the possibility that they can passionately honor combat veterans and still hold true to their values.

"I can think of no more critical peacemaking project for the next 30 to 40 years than trying to bring whatever peace is possible into the hearts of [veterans]," he says.

Rod Deaton

Furthermore, Matthew Yoder, 35, a clinical psychologist, says many veterans did not join the military service for a "life of violence."

"It was an honorable attempt at a better life," he says, adding that many hoped to provide better for their family or get off the streets.

"My daily job is not about the U.S. government," Yoder says. "I'm just helping people." However, Yoder says, he is not certain if he could in good conscience treat active duty soldiers.

Yoder began work treating and researching post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among veterans at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in 2008. According to the Mayo Clinic, PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by a terrifying event.

As a psychologist, Yoder uses "prolonged exposure therapy" with his patients—widely considered an effective way to reduce PTSD symptoms, which include irritability, anxiety, flashbacks, nightmares and more.

Matthew Yoder

During therapy, the patient gradually, systematically and repeatedly recounts the trauma. This aims to encourage the patient to evaluate the situation and understand they can safely return to the daily activities they were avoiding, according to a 2008 article in the American Psychological Association.

Along with exposure therapy, VA psychologists also use "cognitive processing therapy." Philip Lehman, 44, says both therapies are deemed highly effective, based on empirical support.

Lehman has worked as a PTSD and Substance Use Disorder psychologist at the Salem Virginia Medical Center since 2009.

Cognitive processing therapy looks at the way individuals get "stuck in trauma," says Lehman, 44. After traumatic experience, individuals often review the incident and think about ways they could have prevented the trauma. This often evolves into self-blame.

"It's like reliving a sports game where something went wrong over and over," he says. However, in these cases the memories involve death or injury. Over time, the trauma can alter one's worldview in terms of trust of others, safety and more.

"Pushing away trauma symptoms is like pushing a beach ball under water," Lehman says. "It is not a good long-term solution."

Philip Lehman

Lehman says that often substance is used in pushing down the trauma memories and feelings.

Martin says that while medications can be helpful, they are only part of the treatment for PTSD.

"We are learning that PTSD is a 'moral injury' that comes from witnessing or doing things that are against one's moral convictions," he says.

Along with treatments, individuals need long-term communities of people that accept them and listen to their stories, according to Martin.

Fortunately, PTSD is treatable with the correct methods and is not a lifelong condition, as many assume, says Yoder.

"Knowing that 75 percent of the people who come into my office will leave after 10 to15 weeks, having significantly better relationships and lives, is the best part of my job," Yoder says.

However, the rest do not respond to the treatment, and Yoder describes that as "heartbreaking."

Thousands with PTSD never seek help, although the VA now screens for PTSD in most hospital visits. According to Mike Scotti's May 27 article in the *New York Times*, the reasons for lack of treatment include the stigma of PTSD, shame or their lack of trust in the VA, a reality the VA continues to fight.

However, the VA's reputation has improved over the years through better quality of care, the implementation of the patient-centered care model, advanced computerized medical records, renovated facilities and more. The 154 hospitals and 875 clinics run by the Veterans Affairs Department have been ranked best-in-class by a number of independent groups, according to a 2006 article in *BusinessWeek* online.

Some Mennonites are a part of this improved system and, like Lehman, view their jobs as ways to serve others.

"Working here has strengthened my pacifist values," Lehman says. "I see working with veterans as consistent with my pacifist beliefs, but I am not sure if working as an Army psychologist would be."

When folks are in recovery from PTSD or substance abuse, they are often reconnecting to their community, family or church.

"That is congruent with my faith because I see people getting plugged back in, getting better and reconnecting with the values they lost," he says. "I am not trying to convince people that war is wrong, but I am helping them heal from the realities of war."—*Anna Groff*

Additional resources from Mennonites involved with veterans

Eileen Ahearn attends Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church and works as a psychiatrist at the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital. Her article "Helping Those in the Hell of PTSD" ran in 2010 in *The Mennonite*: http://www.themennonite.org/issues/13-11/articles/Helping_those_in_the_hell_of_PTSD

Carolyn Holderread Heggen is a psychotherapist who delivered an address at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., in March on serving veterans. The transcript is available here online: http://peace.mennolink.org/cgi-bin/m.pl?a=957

Rod Deaton attends First Mennonite Church of Indianapolis and is a psychiatrist at the Richard L. Roudebush Veterans Administration Medical Center in Indianapolis. He reflects on his experiences in his blog "Paving the Road Back" at http://ptsdandcombat.com/.

Return (2011, not rated)

While women make up only 14 percent of the active army, the 2011 film *Return* highlights the troubling story of a mother returning to her family in Ohio after duty in the Middle East. The film does not use typical war flashbacks, but Linda Cardellini's excellent acting makes it clear she remains haunted by her experiences and often turns to heavy drinking. When asked about her duty, Cardellini's character responds tersely, "A lot of other people had it worse than me." Feeling rejected, her family moves on from her, while she shuts down the chance for them to show they care. However, the film does not defend her choices or her family's reactions. Instead, it demonstrates the far-reaching and personal effects of war on young families in the United States.—*Anna Groff*

CALENDAR

Peach Cobbler Mennonite Relief Auction, Sept. 14-15, Georgia National Fairgrounds, I-75 Exit 135 in Perry, Ga.

Clarence Jordan Symposium, Americus, Ga., Sept. 28-29.

Hesston College Homecoming Weekend, Hesston, Kan., Sept. 28-30.

Goshen College Homecoming Weekend, Goshen, Ind., Oct. 5-7.

Bethel College Fall Festival and 125th Anniversary, North Newton, Kan., Oct. 11-14.

Bluffton University Homecoming Weekend, Bluffton, Ohio, Oct. 12-13.

Eastern Mennonite University Homecoming and Family Weekend, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 12-14.

WORKERS

Martin, C. Kenneth, began a term as pastor and director of senior ministry of Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on July 1.

Yu, Ming, was licensed as deacon at Kinzer Mennonite Church, Kinzer, Pa., on July 15.

Musser, S. Brent, was ordained as lead pastor of New Providence Mennonite Church, New Providence, Pa., on July 29.

Penner, Wesley, was licensed as co-lead pastor of Millersville Mennonite Church, Millersville, Pa., on July 29.

Penner, Mildred Nafziger, was licensed as co-lead pastor of Millersville Mennonite Church, Millersville, Pa., on July 29.

OBITUARIES

Bender, Merle Leroy, 89, Hesston, Kan., died July 20. Spouse: Donna L. Byler Bender. Parents: David E. and Elizabeth Rediger Bender. Children: Dawn, Diane, David, Dirk, Dana; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 27 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Brooks, Sharon K. Nunemaker, 69, Elkhart, Ind., died Aug.1. Spouse: Allen Brooks (deceased). Parents: Willis and Miriam Harter Nunemaker. Children: David, Cheryl Wise, Michael; four grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 4 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

Chupp, Emma D., 76, Goshen, Ind., died July 13. Parents: Andrew and Anna Yoder Chupp. Funeral: July 18 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Derstine, Callahan Mae, 15, Harleysville, Pa., died July 4, of spine and brain cancer. Parents: Michael and Lucy Schiedel Derstine. Funeral: July 10 at Family Worship Center, Lansdale, Pa.

Dick, Raymond Henry, 96, Mesa, Ariz., died Aug. 1. Spouse: Harriet Kiral Dick (deceased). Spouse: Rosella E. Friesen Dick (deceased). Parents: Henry W. and Marie C. Dick. Children: Rodney Dueck; one grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 12 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minn.

Duerksen, John J., 86, Mountain Lake, Minn., died April 4, of heart failure. Spouse: Tina Krause Duerksen. Parents: John H. and Marie Krahn Duerksen. Children: Arthur, Arnold, Arden; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 9 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Ebersole, Donald Ellsworth, 93, Sterling, Ill., died July 15. Spouse: Marjorie Eileen Alshouse Ebersole. Parents: Lloyd and Rhoda Long Ebersole. Children: Barbara Vietmeier, Debra Lynn Ebersole, Dennis, Donald, Larry, Brian, Stephen, Bradley; 21 grandchildren; 32 great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Ediger, LaVina Frances Gaeddert, 88, Inman, Kan., died July 12. Spouse: Solomon R. Ediger (deceased). Parents: Jacob R. and Ardina B. Froese Gaeddert. Children: Kenny, Kathy Shaffren; five grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 17 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

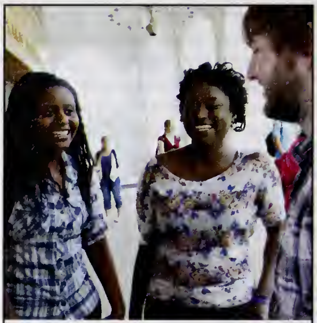
Frey, William Otto, 60, Moundridge, Kan., died June 29, of a heart attack. Spouse: Pamela Hegge Frey. Parents: Orlin and Ester Frey. Children: Jeremy Hegge, Kenneth Frey, Matthew Frey; two grandchildren. Funeral: July 10 at First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge.

Goering, Jon, 64, Newton, Kan., died May 29. Parents: Elmer and Gladys Graber Goering. Funeral: June 4 at First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, Kan.

Grieser, Marvin Daniel, 83, Archbold, Ohio, died July 8. Spouse: Estelle Grieser. Parents: Daniel and Rosa Beck Grieser. Children: Alan, Sharon. Funeral: July 12 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Hershey, Dorothy M. Mellinger, 91, Lancaster, Pa., died July 21. Spouse: Clair J. Hershey (deceased). Parents: Jesse and Mary Diffenbach Mellinger. Children: Allen, Carol Miller, Rosemary Miller, J. Donald; 11 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 26 at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.



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Hess, Kathryn Nissley, 90, Mount Joy, Pa., died June 19, following a brief illness. Spouse: David Leaman Hess, Jr. (deceased). Parents: John Bomberger Nissley and Anna Nissly Nissley. Children: David L., John, Joanne Siegrist, Kate Kooker, Dwight; 12 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 26 at Mount Joy Mennonite Church.

Hess, Robert Buckwalter, 89, Terre Hill, Pa., died July 19. Spouse: Martha Hoffer Hess. Parents: David Leaman Hess and Amelia Buckwalter Hess. Children: Susan A. Hurst, Martha L. Kelley, Robert B., Jr., Thomas I., Rebecca F. Good, Philip D.; 14 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Hofer, Anna W. Gross, 96, Freeman, S.D., died June 21. Spouse: Jake M. Hofer (deceased). Parents: William P. and Katy Pullman Gross. Children: Ilene Schartner, Irene Hofer. Funeral: June 25 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Hurst, Robert Lee, 66, New Holland, Pa., died July 6. Spouse: Susan Hess Hurst. Parents: Edwin and Mabel Weber Hurst. Children: Michael Robert, Steven James, Christina Dirks; two grandchildren. Funeral: July 12 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Kindy, Orie Allen, 90, Plumsteadville, Pa., died June 20, of lymphoma. Spouse: Florence M. Landes Kindy. Parents: Leonard Elias and Mabel Ruth Kauffman Kindy. Children: Carol Schrock, David, Karen Fennel, Diene Qaqish, Rosemary Landis, Joanne Mercer, Rachel Reinford; 18 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 25 at Doylestown Mennonite Church, Doylestown, Pa.

Krehbiel, Rollins K. "R.K.," 98, Hesston, Kan., died June 17. Spouse: Louise Schmidt Krehbiel (deceased). Parents: Bernhard S. and Mary Voran Krehbiel. Children: Sharon Stutzman, James, Wayne; six grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: June 21 at Schowalter Villa's Chapel, Hesston.

Lehman, Ruth Krady, 90, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 1, of a severe stroke. Spouse: Harold D. Lehman. Parents: D. Stoner and Frances Miller Krady. Children: Kenneth, Daniel, David, Larry; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 5 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Lohrentz, Lola Faire Eisenbeis, 72, Lawrence, Kan., died May 8, of renal failure caused by multiple myeloma. Spouse: Kenneth P. Lohrentz. Parents: Jacob and Esther Graber Eisenbeis. Children: Greta Marie Carter-Wilson, Michelle Elise Schwartz; five grandchildren. Funeral: May 12 at First Baptist Church, Lawrence.

Martin, Richard "Dick," 81, West Liberty, Ohio, died Jan. 16. Spouse: Elizabeth June Houser Martin. Parents: Samuel H. and Olive Barkdoll Martin. Children: Richard, Tim, Rob, Heidi Martin Juster, Nancy Weaver; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 28 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Martin, Weaver Weber, 86, Reinholds, Pa., died May 19, of congestive heart failure. Spouse: Kathryn May Weaver Martin. Parents: Aaron Horning and Alice Gehman Weber Martin. Children: Rosalind D. Ernest, M. Fern Martin, L. Merle, Carol Martin Johnson; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 26 at Bowmansville Mennonite Church, Bowmansville, Pa.

Miller, Anna Margaret Steiner, 78, Louisville, Ohio, died June 20. Spouse: Richard Jay Miller. Parents: Dayton and Ruth Steiner. Children: Karen Halfhill, Linda Schnabel, Dale, Randy; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 25 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Miller, Esther A. Rohrer, 90, Walnut Creek, Ohio, died July 9. Spouse: Wayne E. Miller. Parents: Harvey and Maggie Kurtz Rohrer. Children: Neva Stambaugh, Audrey Schlabach; five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 12 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville, Ohio.

Miller, Rev. Jacob John Jeremiah, 92, Kalona, Iowa, July 2. Spouse: Mabel Brenneman Miller. Parents: Leroy and Lydia Troyer Miller. Children: Linda Rowold, John David, Marlin, Jim, Gary; eight grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 8 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Miller, Virgil, 72, Archbold, Ohio, died July 19, of cancer. Spouse: Mary Ann Zook Miller. Parents: Charles and Bessie Frey Miller. Children: Audra Mark, Brian; four grandchildren. Funeral: July 23 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Oswald, Doretta Miller, 88, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 5. Spouse: Leland Oswald (deceased). Parents: Jess and Katie Schweitzer Miller. Children: Joan Kulp, Jane Yoder, Donald; six grandchildren. Funeral: May 12 at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg.

Peachey, Ellen Elizabeth Shenk, 88, Newport News, Va., died April 26. Spouse: Paul Peachey. Parents: Henry Michael and Frankie Dora Schowalter Shenk. Children: Barbara Anne Piekarski, Janet Peachey, Carl, George, James; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 2 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Regehr, Dorothy Klassen Ratzlaff, 98, Inman, Kan., died July 19. Spouse: Elmer Regehr (deceased). Parents: John and Sarah Klassen Ratzlaff. Children: Gary S., Dean; six grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 24 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Rupp, Mary A. Johnson, 69, Wauseon, Ohio, died Aug. 3 of cancer. Spouse: Steve Rupp. Parents: Lenore Amstutz and Melvin Johnson. Children: Jeff, Kim Reaver; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Shank, Irma L. Leinbach, 92, Elkhart, Ind., died Aug. 2. Spouse: Jacob W. Shank (deceased). Parents: Noah and Minnie Holderbaum Leinbach. Child: Ron; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 5 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Snapp, Donald McKenzie, 86, Denver, Colo., died July 24, of Parkinson's Disease. Spouse: Elizabeth Faire Stucky Snapp. Parents: Kenneth M. and Mary Louise Sanger Snapp. Children: Laura Snapp, Jeffry. Funeral: Aug. 5 at Washington Park United Church of Christ, Denver.

Sommer, Wayne C., 84, Foosland, Ill., died July 23. Spouse: Joanne Reber Sommer. Parents: Nelson and Ella Kauffmann Sommer. Children: Michael, Brad; four grandchildren. Funeral: July 27 at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

Sweigart, Melvin Glenn, 90, Garden Spot Village, New Holland, Pa., died June 10. Spouse: Gladys A. Stoltzfus Sweigart. Parents: Samuel Good Sweigart and Anna Garman Shirk Sweigart. Children: Philip B., Rick M., Rebecca K. Boyer, Jon; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 14 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Vrolijk, Dirk, 80, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 8. Spouse: Mary Lou Miller Vrolijk. Louise Katherine Nice Vrolijk (deceased). Parents: Johannes and Geerjte Biesheuvel Vrolijk. Children: Judith Diane Hiett, Joyce Marie Martin, Linwood Dirk Vrolijk, Jeanette Renee Foste, Dirk Alan Vrolijkr; 14 grandchildren. Funeral: July 13 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Rockingham County, Va.

Zehr, Gilbert J., 77, Lowville, N.Y., died July 20. Spouse: Janet K. Widrick Zehr. Parents: David H. and Veronica Widrick Zehr. Children: Jesse, Nathan, Alma Roes, Joan Marie Gerdon, Allison Guenthner, Adrienne Zehr, Gale; 18 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; one step-great-grandson. Funeral: July 23 at Lowville Mennonite Church.

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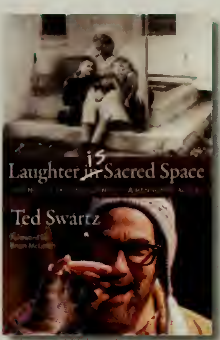

Laughter Is Sacred Space
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by Ted Swartz

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The **Perryton Mennonite Church** in Perryton, Texas, will celebrate the ***50th anniversary*** of the merging of the Bethel Mennonite Church and the Perryton Mennonite Church on Oct. 13-14, 2012. Saturday afternoon, a tour will be given to the Bethel Cemetery and Church, followed by a cookout and a concert by John Schmid. Sunday morning worship service will feature former pastors followed by a fellowship meal. Everyone who has connections to either church is more than welcome to attend. Contact info: perrytonmennonite@hotmail.com or 806-435-3437.

Wilderness Wind seeks a ***full-time executive director*** to begin fall/winter 2012. Wilderness Wind is a Mennonite camp focused on canoe trips, based in Ely, Minn. The executive director has overall strategy and operational responsibility for staff and programs. Interested candidates should visit www.wilderness-wind.org for further details.

Short-term rental in Boston. two-bedroom furnished condo. Rent several days to several weeks. $70/night or $450/week. Contact: dorothysmucker@gmail.com; 717-413-9132.

Want to work with youth in Colombia? The Mennonite Church in Pereira is inviting a volunteer to join them in their youth work and worship, including teaching music and English lessons, preferably for two years or more. For more information, go to www.Service.MennoniteMission.net.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. In the Books section type the author's name. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

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3 misperceptions about the generation gap

Peter Epp teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba.

You know you may be on a vacation designed for a different demographic when a companion twice your age suggests: "Let's get a picture together. We're in the same age group: under 65." Such was the case when Shanda, my wife, and I joined my parents and 33 other new friends on the California Mennonite Historical Society's adventure "Seeing Poland Through Mennonite Eyes," a 12-day excursion through Poland in search of historic Mennonite graves, churches, dikes and artwork.

If you asked the tour organizers, they probably wouldn't say this trip was for older Mennonites. They'd just say that younger people aren't coming. And while we could definitely make a few suggestions to bring the average age down (how about more karaoke on the bus rides and less time looking for distant relatives in overgrown graveyards?) the organizers may be right.

In my experience, our older generations want their Mennonite network—not just their bus tours but their worship services, small groups, Sunday school classes and Saturday morning breakfast clubs—to be intergenerational. For all the legitimate concerns we younger Mennonites have, there's still much more we can know and do to cross the generational bridge ourselves.

And while these bridges sometimes feel overgrown, they can actually be uncovered pretty easily. Sometimes we just have to work through some misconceptions to find them. Here are just three of the misconceptions I was reminded of on this trip:

Misconception #1: Young Mennonites are disempowered.

First, I should admit that I do think there is more our corporate body, administered mainly by older Mennonites, can do to keep young adults in the church.

That said, on a day-to-day, side-by-side level, say, on a bus tour of Poland, you realize that young Mennonites have a lot of power. Before we left for the trip, most of our friends predicted, "Those old people are going to love you." It was true; we often felt it. People wanted to know us and hear our opinions. And while I'd love to chalk that up to charm and good looks, I'm pretty sure it was mostly just our age.

Misconception #2: Our childhood perceptions are always reliable.

Nothing brings back childhood memories like going on vacation with your former elementary school principal. That's right; for much of the trip, Shanda and I sat right in front of the same man I'd been sent to when I'd lamely written "F Word" on the school wall to try to be funny. But guess who is actually funny? My principal. And his wife. In fact, they were hilarious. I may have dragged my feet when asked to see him 20 years ago, but now Shanda and I were vying for seats by him on the bus and at supper.

As I thought about this shift in my perception, I couldn't help but wonder how many other elders I still see through the limited lens of my childhood and how many other young adults do the same thing. The perceptions we collect as children are legitimate, but there's no way they're definitive, and we often operate as if they are.

There's much we younger adults can do to make our communities more generationally diverse.

Misconception #3: The generation gap is insurmountable.

From our first moments on the bus, I unconsciously did what I think many of us do in new situations: I listened to people's conversations to decide who I liked. As is usually the case when I do this, I keyed on politics and hot-button issues, and in this case I didn't expect to hear much I liked.

As the trip went on, however, two lessons I've already started learning were reinforced. First, "old perspectives" are not automatically closed-minded ones. In fact, they come from a lifetime of diverse experiences. Second, it may be easier to disagree with someone older than with someone your own age. I got along best with a man who sees my government differently from me. But when you're already enjoying the surprise of feeling connected to someone more than twice your age, you're suddenly more willing to live with that difference.

If I put these lessons together, I remember there's much we younger adults can do to make our communities more generationally diverse. And while I heartily endorse the next Menno-tour of Poland as one way to do it, I also recognize that a Polish graveyard isn't the only place you can uncover some long-lost connections. TM

FILM REVIEW

Beasts of the Southern Wild (PG-13) tells a mythic tale through the viewpoint of Hushpuppy (6-year-old Quvenzhané Wallis in an amazing performance). She lives with her father, Wink, in the Bathtub, a southern Delta community at the edge of the world. He has a mysterious illness and tries to prepare Hushpuppy with tough love. A storm hits, and the ice caps melt, unleashing an army of prehistoric creatures called aurochs. Hushpuppy goes in search of her lost mother. Likely you've not seen a film like this.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

relentless goodbye

Relentless Goodbye: Grief and Love in the Shadow of Dementia by Ginnie Horst Burkholder (Herald Press, 2012, $16.99) is an unflinching, honest account of Burkholder's long journey of caring for her husband, who has Lewy body dementia. She writes, "Just when you've figured out how to cope, you start all over because now there is something new falling away in this snail-paced, growing-down goodbye."—*gh*

Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell
Our God Is
UNDOCUMENTED
Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice

Our God Is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice by Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell (Orbis Books, 2012, $24) shows how the perspective of the immigrant offers fresh eyes for reading the Bible. In alternating chapters, Mennonite theologian Myers presents biblical reflections, while pastor Colwell tells stories of immigrants. Together they look at "what it means for Christian disciples to be faithful to an 'undocumented' God and a 'refugee' Christ." This is an excellent study for those going to Phoenix 2013, the Mennonite Church USA convention.—*gh*

Are art and violence connected?

This summer's tragic shootings in Aurora, Colo., and Madison, Wis., raise a question that often comes up with such events: the relationship of art and violence.

The July 19 shooting by James E. Holmes in Aurora happened in a cineplex at a midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*, killing 12 people and injuring 58 others.

The shooting on Aug. 5 at a Sikh temple in Madison killed six people and wounded three others. The shooter, Wade M. Page, had performed in notorious white power bands, such as Youngland, Intimidation One, End Apathy and Definite Hate.

Did the movie or the music contribute to the killings? Or do they reflect the violence in our culture? Or are the relationship of art to violence different in the two incidents?

In a July 26 *New York Times* article, "Don't Blame the Movie, but Don't Ignore It Either," Stephen Marche claims the answers aren't so simple.

He writes that while we have largely passed the point where we ask whether art causes such disasters, a new cliché has taken hold "that insists on an absolute separation between violent art and real violence."

He claims that real violence and violent art have been connected historically. "Some of the most violent scenes in American history have emerged from theatrical spaces," he writes.

One example was the Astor Place riot in 1849, which started in competing performances of "Macbeth," one by the Englishman William Charles Macready and the other by the American Edwin Forrest. "The theater in that case brought to the surface underlying tensions that were rampant in New York at the time," he writes, "between immigrants and nativists, between the lower classes and the police. More than 20 people died in the ensuing struggle."

Further, he notes that John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln during the play "Our American Cousin." Booth was an actor and was imitating Brutus from Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar."

Holmes allegedly said, "I am the Joker" before opening fire, and an employee at the jail where he was arraigned told a reporter, "He thinks he's acting in a movie."

This does not show that the Batman movie caused the shooting, but it does point to the power of art to affect individuals prone to violence.

In an Aug. 8 *New York Times* article, "The Sound of Hate," Robert Futrell and Pete Simi write about "hidden spaces of hate" where Neo-Nazis, who often straddle the worlds of white power and mainstream society, thrive.

One of the most important of these hidden spaces is the white power music scene. "Neo-Nazis are particularly adept at incorporating music into just about every aspect of the movement," Futrell and Simi write, "having grasped the medium's capacity to bring adherents together into shared experiences and sustain communities anchored in Aryan ideology."

This music scene drew Page to the movement. While the music conveyed anger, hatred and outrage toward racial enemies, it also created "a collective bond that strengthens members' commitment to the cause," they write.

Isn't this what churches do? We use music as well as sermons and prayers in our worship to help bind us together as followers of Jesus Christ.

The obvious difference is that our hymns (we hope) do not promote hatred and violence but love and peace.

Art has power we should not ignore, but in itself it does not produce violence. That requires an already fertile field. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

role in salvation history without equal time spent discussing the wonder that God is reconciling the whole world to God's self through Christ. I'm concerned we have read the road signs and imagined the end of the Mennonite church, forgetting that the church belongs to Christ and not to us. Do we trust Christ to see us through?

No matter what happens to the word missional, I hope we never get so caught up in our need to do and be something useful that we forget that at the end of history stands the promise of redemption. And God will make it so. *—Ron Adams, Madison, Wis.*

Address gay membership

After reading Everett Thomas' editorial (August), I am displeased it's only about immigration issues and their effect on the church. I agree that the 2013 convention is not the place to "fix" the problem, but it is a good place to discuss this important issue.

I would like to see as much emphasis on gay membership in the church. It is also a national (and local) issue that somehow affects everyone, especially those interested in the church. This also is an issue that will not be fixed at a national convention, but it is a great way to keep the dialogue going.

Quoting Mr. Stoner in your editorial: "We want to be a Christlike presence of care and compassion for those who are suffering from a broken policy of attentiveness to injustice and speaking truth, of respect for those with differing perspectives and building bridges." The same could be said of the issue of gay membership in the Mennonite church.*—James Rhodes, Topeka, Kan.*

A memory of a blessing

Seeing the notice about Winifred Waltner (Deaths, July) brought back a memory from 1961.

During our last year at seminary, Harold and I were youth sponsors at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind. Rose, daughter of Winifred and Erland Waltner, was one of the youth.

Before we left seminary and went to serve in Gulfport, Miss., Winifred invited me to her home to thank me for our part in Rose's youth group. Later, Winifred had me kneel while she placed her hands on my head and gave a prayer of blessing for our Gulfport ministry. Then she went to her China cupboard tea cup collection, took out a cup and said, "Here is a tea cup Erland brought me from China. It's cracked, and you'll never use it. But you'll always remember me when you see it."

I have this tea cup to this day, 51 years later, and have never forgotten the affirmation, grace and simplicity of Winifred's blessing.*—Rosella Wiens Regier, North Newton, Kan.*

Correction: Wil Veist (August, page 22) is managing editor of multimedia for Mennonite Mission Network's Marketing Department.

RESOURCES

The Activist Impulse: Essays on the Intersection of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism, edited by Jared S. Burkholder and David C. Cramer (Pickwick Publications, 2012, $49), examines the complex relationship between evangelicalism and Anabaptism in the past 30 years. It brings established experts and new voices together to explore the historical and theological intersection of these two traditions.

Death and Justice in the Early Church: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion and Capital Punishment, edited by Ronald J. Sider (BakerAcademic, 2012, $27.99), provides in English translation all extant data directly relevant to the witness of the early church until Constantine on killing. It draws from early church writings, archaeological finds and Roman writings.

Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability and Inclusion by Mark I. Pinsky (Alban, 2012, $18) tells 64 stories about the way faith communities welcome and affirm people with disabilities in worship, ministry, fellowship and leadership.

Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision by Randy S. Woodley (Eerdmans, 2012, $25) encourages the practice of the Native American "Harmony Way," a concept like biblical "shalom." Doing so can bring reconciliation between Euro-Westerners and indigenous peoples, a new connectedness with the Creator and creation, an end to imperial warfare, the ability to live in the moment, justice and restoration.

Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life by Michael W. Austin and R. Douglas Geivett (Eerdmans, 2012, $26) explores 11 select virtues on a practical level: faith, openmindedness, wisdom, zeal, hope, contentment, courage, love, compassion, forgiveness and humility.

Woman, Man and God in Modern Islam by Theodore Friend (Eerdmans, 2012, $35) recounts the author's journey across Asia and the Middle East to understand firsthand the life situations of women in Indonesia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey.

How the Church Fails Business People (and what can be done about it) by John C. Knapp (Eerdmans, 2012, $15) explores the historical, cultural and educational background to the faith-work gap and proposes a new theological framework for Christian life in the public square.

Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation, edited by Dwight J. Zscheile (Eerdmans, 2012, $30), reimagines spiritual formation through the lens of mission.

Signposts: A hospitable community

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.—Hebrews 13:2 (TNIV)

I was sitting in the departure lounge at Heathrow Airport in London. Seated on one side of me were several women in white saris, veiled except for their eyes. On the other side were several bearded men in turbans, conversing enthusiastically in a tongue that was foreign to me. Another wore a specially-designed skull cap, which I took to be Islamic garb.

Suddenly, several of these men stood up and pushed apart two rows of lounge chairs. They took off their shoes as a gray-bearded man pulled out a large folded cloth from his Pakistani travel bag and spread it on the floor. Five men sat cross-legged in a tight circle in front of me, chatting jovially as they prepared for a meal. One man reached into a bag and produced a bright red pitcher. Another uncovered a plastic container filled with ground meat. A third laid out a stack of flat cakes.

A man seated on a lounge chair nearby me remained in his chair. Beckoning to me with his hand, he asked in broken English, "Will you join us for meat?" Taken aback by the unexpected invitation, I graciously declined since I had just eaten lunch. But I watched with interest as the men dined a few feet away.

They ate quickly, tearing off pieces of the flat cakes and using them to dip meat out of the dish. Within a few minutes, the bowl was empty. After they got up from the meal, they wiped their hands on their flowing robes, put away the containers, folded up the cloth, and returned the lounge chairs to their places. Not long after, they boarded a plane.

I was touched by their offer of hospitality. I am embarrassed to admit that had I been eating lunch with a tight circle of friends that day, I would not have invited others to join us. I wrestle with the same reserve we often face in our churches. We are so involved with our circle of acquaintances that we don't reach out to the stranger. I pray that God will enable us all to become more missional in this regard. It's a character trait we can cultivate, as we seek God's grace and enablement.

Missional character trait: The church practices hospitality.

Signpost: Welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community plays a central role.

The spread of the early church throughout the known world depended almost entirely on the hospitality of believers who invited people into their homes. When they invited people to "come to church," it meant bringing them into someone's home for worship and fellowship. To our knowledge, there were no meetinghouses dedicated for Christian worship for two centuries after Pentecost.

In today's postmodern world, many churches are growing in the same way—by extending warm hospitality to people who are not yet part of a church. Most people will never become committed believers without a specific invitation to come to Christ and the church. Especially in the early stages of a new church, house fellowships function as the core of the church's identity. In later stages of church life, home groups may serve as an essential place of hospitality within the larger congregation. In either case, hospitality is a ministry of loving and caring that draws new people into our community of faith and helps long-term members stay meaningfully connected.

God is calling us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace. Only through the transforming work of God will we become more like Jesus, expanding our welcome by inviting those who are now strangers into our circle of friends. May God enable us to this end. TM

Most people will never become committed believers without a specific invitation to come to Christ and the church.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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ONLINE

Can someone 'look illegal'?

Anna Groff, associate editor, lives on the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona.

As Phoenix 2013 approaches, Mennonites who prepare to attend the convention, participate online or abstain for a variety of reasons will benefit from a broader understanding of Arizona's history and culture.

Back in 2010, after the signing of Arizona's immigration law, members of the White Mountain Apache Tribe began to take special precautions when leaving their reservation in Eastern Arizona.

Despite their undisputed U.S. citizenship, many tribal members made sure to carry their state identification and tribal identification cards, says Salina Washburn, a member of the White Mountain Apache Tribe and an adult services specialist.

In June, the Supreme Court upheld a disputed aspect of the law, SB 1070, that requires police to check the immigration status of anyone they suspect of being in the country illegally. This "show me your papers" policy carries far-reaching—and perhaps unexpected—repercussions.

This 'show me your papers' policy carries far-reaching—and perhaps unexpected—repercussions.

First, immigration issues in this state cannot be defined as simply a tension between Arizona and Mexico. Arizona—a state since only 1912—was the last of the contiguous states admitted into the union. About one-quarter of Arizona is federal land that serves as home to a variety of Native American tribes.

Guadalupe—a town within Tempe, Ariz.—illustrates the combining of cultures in the Southwest, as it is a community of Hispanic individuals and Pascua Yaqui Indians. Before returning to her reservation, Washburn lived near Guadalupe. Prior to the law, she felt safe walking around but later felt profiled by police.

When Native Americans are away from their reservations, police profile them based on skin color and the style or upkeep of a vehicle, she says. Some Pascua Yaqui Indians in Guadalupe experienced so much pressure that they chose to write, "I am a U.S. citizen" on their windshields.

This action was not necessary in the past. A 2010 resolution from the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona points out that some tribes have not required members to carry tribal membership documents, and some members do not even possess a birth certificate or proper documents. Furthering the potential for discrimination, some Southwest American Indians also hold traditionally Hispanic last names.

Second, the law affects the spectrum of ethnicities abundant in Arizona. According to Fred Soto, White Mountain deputy tribal attorney, the law introduces skin tone and race into a legal standard used in determining how to apply and enforce law.

Soto asks: "Why should I, or an Apache man or a Navajo woman, or even a dark-skinned Caucasian American be treated differently by the law from the light-skinned Caucasian, Hispanic, Native American or Asian?"

Soto posed this question to a Gila (Ariz.) County candidate for sheriff in a room full of Apache leaders and constituents. The candidate said he would establish policies to ensure the law was not abused. SB 1070 would only "kick in" if the individual in the traffic stop "was not wearing shoes, was shirtless or looked illegal."

How can someone 'look illegal'?

Stories like this and Washburn's demonstrate that the immigration law unfairly affects many people of color, since it creates a new lens for law enforcement and places unrealistic expectations on law enforcement officers.

Energized in new ways, Arizona residents are speaking out against the law, for example, by protesting at the Tent City Jail in Phoenix and supporting the trial against Sheriff Joe Arpaio for alleged racial profiling.

With open minds and a humble approach, Mennonites attending Phoenix 2013 can prepare to add their voices and speak against the injustices.—*ag*

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Online registration for both conferences begins October 1.

TheMennonite October 2012 | Volume 15, Number 10

CONTENTS

12 The power of story
—Gordon Houser

15 Swords into brooms
—Robert Brenneman

17 Questions for women leaders
—Joanne Dietzel

18 The calling
—Ryan Ahlgrim

21 Moving on
—Melissa S. Roth

24 Communion, interrupted
—Mark Schloneger

27 Dark Knight in Aurora
—Dirk Eitzen

32 Executive Board looks at fund-raising needs
—Gordon Houser

34 Reconciliation at Iglesia Menonita Hispana gathering—Rafael Barahona

36 Good news by the seaside—Andrew Clouse

38 Giving as a spiritual discipline—Anna Groff

41 Young Cheyenne leaders teach their heritage
—Ed Nyce

43 Fight over water in northern Mexico—John D. Roth

44 Harold S. Bender and the Anabaptist vision
—Leonard Gross

ON THE COVER: Photo provided by Robert Brenneman

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
48 For the Record
50 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

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POSTMASTER send address changes to:
The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1703
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

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Correction

I apologize for ambiguous wording in my article "Congo Mennonites Celebrate 100 Years" (September). But editing has made one statement overtly false. What I wrote was, "The most passionate debate at the celebration centered on the decision to ordain women. Of the three Mennonite denominations in Congo, CMCO was [past tense] the only one still denying ordination to women."

The word that CMCO's general assembly voted to ordain women came just hours before the start of the centennial celebration. For many, there was jubilation. For others, there was concern and caution about not proceeding with actual ordinations of women too rapidly because of disruptions that it could cause in family life of women pastors and problems that might arise in congregational life. The passionate debate was about when to ordain pastors, not whether to ordain pastors. *—Lynda Hollinger-Janzen, writer, Mennonite Mission Network*

Serving veterans in VA hospitals

In "Serving Veterans in VA Hospitals" (September), Rod Deaton says, "If we still have central air and the audacity to darken the door of a Starbucks, we owe our easy access to those amenities to many combat veterans." He goes on to express his hope that we can "passionately honor" combat veterans while holding true to our values.

As a veteran who is now a pacifist Christian and a Mennonite, my response is that I desire neither gratitude nor honors for previously choosing the wrong response to enemies.

Glorifying military service is perhaps the most effective way society recruits its young, but I neither expect nor desire them to kill my enemies for me when I refuse to do it myself. If access to central air and Starbucks requires killing, then I'd rather live in a 17th-century agrarian economy. May God decide my freedoms and prosperity and safeguard them without expecting Christian soldiers to disobey Christ.—*Scott Smith, Greensboro, N.C.*

Thank you for Anna Groff's excellent story "Serving Veterans in VA Hospitals," published in the Sept. 3 *TMail.*

I have for too long felt that convicted Mennonite pacifists prematurely judge —or simply judge too harshly—those who have chosen an alternative path. The vignettes of Mennonites who work in the Veterans Administration system are immensely encouraging and offer another way to do ministry among those who believe differently as well as those who seek and need healing as a result of war.

I'll share links to this story on Mennonite Church Canada's Live for Peace Facebook page as well as on our website, www.liveforpeace.org. Thanks for lifting up these people and their stories.—*Dan Dyck, director of communications, Mennonite Church Canada*

Thanks for the piece on those who are working to heal the wounds of war. National Public Radio's series with ProPublica focusing on the challenges of veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries has convinced me that our country has a tough road ahead as more veterans' families deal with the destruction of war long after loved ones return from combat. Though not always as physically deadly, these vets bring home their own set of unexploded "cluster bombs" like the real ones our countries have left behind in

Asia. Our government has failed miserably in fulfilling the health-care obligations made to veterans. It's time the peace churches made a more intensive effort to reach out to those who are suffering as a result. Praise God we already have some folks enlisted in this effort.—*Tony Krabill, Elkhart, Ind.*

Another Mennonite connection

Regarding "A Life of Opportunity" (September): This interesting article on Joyce Bontrager Lehman mentions that she taught at Goshen (Ind.) College and that she finished college—a feat for a female from her background. But, oddly, it doesn't mention that she went to college at a Mennonite school, specifically Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va. She is a 1965 graduate (math education major). —*Bonnie Price Lofton, editor-in-chief, Eastern Mennonite University*

Worship and be deported

My stomach turns when I think about our denomination going to Phoenix for next year's convention. We can't attend. I'm an American citizen, but my partner is not. I know this discussion is over. But the feelings are not.

Why would a Mennonite denomination decide to go someplace where members and those we love will be at risk of deportation? "Come worship with us and be deported."

A statement like, "I'll miss those who can't come because of immigration, but I hope they can participate in the future" feels deeply insensitive. That is the message the U.S. government makes to us: "Oh, so sorry you can't participate. This has been your home for decades, our mistake at the immigration office made you illegal, but too bad."—*Jeanne Clark, Riverside, Ill.*

Tillie Yoder Nauraine

I wish to thank Steve Yoder of Harrisonburg, Va., for his letter in the July issue about his aunt Tillie Yoder Nauraine. It brought to mind such wonderful memories of his great-aunt Elizabeth Yoder. She must have come to our Howard-Miami (Kokomo, Ind.) worship service on Sundays when the Amish did not have church. Thanks to your family—father Aden, aunt Ann Showalter, and others I do not know—for your contribution to our church. —*Elaine Sommers Rich, Bluffton Ohio*

In God we trust?

On the reverse side of our dollar is the inscription "In God We Trust." If only that were true. In almost every speech, both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney state that their trust is in the strength of the U.S. military, and they will do everything in their power, including spending endless amounts of money, to maintain the strongest military force in the world. With few exceptions, all the senators and representatives by their speeches and votes also place their ultimate trust in the U.S. military.

Unfortunately, the American public, made up largely of professing Christians, has put its trust and allegiance in the overpowering force of the U.S. military due to the messages of fear from the Military Industrial Complex.

Every major empire in the past has collapsed, even though they were the superior force in the world at that time. Their collapse usually came from internal decay rather than being defeated by an outside militarily force.

The U.S. empire will collapse in the foreseeable future if the military budget is not drastically cut while spending is cut for things that make living in this country so wonderful. It will collapse because there is no money to support the huge military, or there may be an internal revolt by the public demanding a better quality of life.

Whatever happened to trusting God?—*Paul Leatherman, Lititz, Pa.*

IN THIS ISSUE

This election season we publish several articles and an editorial intended to help integrate our faith with the voting process. On page 24, pastor Mark Schloneger writes about an idea he and another pastor propose: an Election-Day Communion service. The Executive Board supports the proposal and calls for prayer and fasting before Election Day. But a Pennsylvania group calls for Mennonites to vote for neither presidential candidate (page 33).

The role of story emerged unintentionally in two unrelated pieces. Gordon Houser's cover story describes how Bob Brenneman dignifies the lives of gang members in Central America by telling their stories (page 12), while columnist John D. Roth (page 9) warns of "the danger of a single story."

In his article, Ryan Ahlgrim wrestles with how a person is called to pastoral ministry (page 18).

Melissa S. Roth describes the pains of seeing families leave a congregation but rejoices in the fellowship that continues (page 21).

A column we published about vaccines (Opinion, August) sparked three health-care professionals from Indiana to offer a rebuttal and staunch defense of vaccinations (page 31).

News from Mennonite Church USA includes a release about Iglesia Menonita Hispana's summer gathering and reconciliation that emerged between leaders who had earlier been at odds over the location of next summer's convention in Phoenix (page 34). Gordon Houser also reports on the Executive Board's Sept. 20-22 meeting (page 32).

Finally, John D. Roth calls our attention to problems between Mennonites and their neighbors in northern Mexico (page 43). Tensions over water rights have escalated, and several dams have been destroyed and wells shut down.—*Editor*

AMBS becomes Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ELKHART, Ind.—The first day of classes signaled more than the beginning of a new school year; it also signaled the roll out of a new name as Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary became Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

"Much of our name is continuous with our past; we continue as Mennonite Biblical Seminary," Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, said Aug. 28 at her morning chapel message. "But there are new ways we are owning our identity and living into our mission as an Anabaptist seminary."

As with the early Anabaptists, Wenger Shenk reminded the seminary community that "once again there is a renewal going on that is tapping into the vision of Jesus and who Jesus calls us to be as disciples who radically serve as ambassadors of peace, witnesses of reconciliation and ministers of a new covenant."

The term Associated refers to a history in which two seminaries, one from the former Mennonite Church and one from the former General Conference Mennonite Church, came together to form one institution. The name change "signals a pivotal moment for a deep reclaiming of our mission to educate followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world," Wenger Shenk said.—*AMBS*

Virgil Miller, former Goshen College board chair, dies at 72

GOSHEN, Ind.—Virgil L. Miller, 72, former chair of the Goshen College Board of Directors, died July 19 at his home in Archbold, Ohio, following a two-year struggle with cancer.

Miller spent his entire career at Sauder Manufacturing, Inc., rising from salesman to president and chief executive officer and later, chairman of the board. He gave his time generously to many nonprofit and charitable organizations and served as chair of several boards. He was appointed to the Goshen College board in 1997, became chair in October 1999 and served as the board's leader until he stepped down in 2009.

As chair, Miller helped the college establish new academic programs, maintain financial stability amid economic downturns, build the Music Center and student apartments, move to a new policy governance model for the board and mentor two presidents.

Besides his steady leadership, Miller and his wife, Mary Ann, donated to Goshen College for 37 continuous years. They gave generously for the construction of the Roman Gingerich Recreation-Fitness Center and the Music Center and were members of the President's Circle, which is made up of households that donate $25,000 or more annually to the college.

Former President Shirley H. Showalter said Miller was a valuable role model.—*Goshen College*

Carol Roth

Mennonite staff visit immigration exhibit

On Aug. 30, 14 staff members from the Mennonite Church USA offices in Newton, Kan., visited an exhibit at Kauffman Museum in North Newton, Kan., called "Americans by Choice," which presents information about immigration to Kansas. John Thiesen of the Mennonite Library and Archives talked to the group about Mennonite immigration to Kansas.—*Gordon Houser*

MEA calls for proposals for peoplehood education

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), the education agency of Mennonite Church USA, is inviting proposals for grants from its Fund for Peoplehood Education, a donor-restricted term endowment. The fund supports initiatives that promote the distinctive features of church-sponsored education and encourage strong ties between Mennonite Church USA and its schools.

The fund achieves this purpose by supporting: interpretive projects that advocate church-sponsored schools, innovative ways of calling and orienting gifted members to the teaching ministry, orientation programs for teachers, administrators and trustees, and action-oriented research that enhances church-school relationships.

Priority is given to projects that strengthen church-school ties and interpret the distinctive features of Anabaptist/Mennonite education and that cultivate educational leadership among younger members of Mennonite Church USA.

The deadline for submission of proposals is Oct. 16. For fund policies and an application form, e-mail MEA at info@MennoniteEducation.org, or call 574-642-3164.—*MEA*

Arli Klassen named to fund-raising role for MWC

KITCHENER, Ontario—Arli Klassen of Kitchener will serve as development manager for Mennonite World Conference (MWC) beginning Oct. 1.

Until May or June of 2013, she will work half-time with responsibilities for MWC fund-raising and donor relations in North America. Then her role could become full-time with fund-raising responsibilities not only in North America but also in other parts of the world.

"I am passionate about the global church," says Klassen, who served as executive director of Mennonite Central Committee from 2008 to last March. "We don't understand God fully until we get to know people from other cultures and hear about their understanding of God," she says.—*MWC*

MCC photo by Hana Clemens

Children in Congo

Jacquie Yalala Kibiriti, pictured with her youngest child Olive, and her family live in Mubimbi, a camp for internally displaced people in eastern Congo. Kibiriti's children participate in a Mennonite Central Committee Global Family program that provides resources for them to attend school. It is one of two Global Family programs for displaced students in the region.—*MCC*

Mennonites, Church of God build relationship

ELKHART, Ind.—Since 2005, Mennonite Church USA has been cultivating a relationship with the Church of God, a Pentecostal denomination based in Cleveland, Tenn. After several years of conversations between scholars and pastors, senior leaders from both churches are now engaged in conversation and relationship.

Last year, Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, and Virgil Vogt of Reba Place Fellowship, Evanston, Ill., met in Cleveland, Tenn., with Church of God General Overseer Raymond Culpepper and his executive committee.

In July, Stutzman, Vogt and André Gingerich Stoner, director of interchurch relations, were guests at the Church of God assembly in Orlando, Fla., where they met with various Church of God leaders, including incoming General Overseer Mark Williams.

After attending the Church of God assembly, Stutzman said: "I think we have a lot to learn from our brothers and sisters in the Church of God. I hope they can help us reexamine the role and power of the Spirit in the life of our own church."—*Mennonite Church USA*

A. Grace Wenger, teacher and writer, dies at 93

LANCASTER, Pa.—A. Grace Wenger, 93, of Landis Homes, a longtime college teacher who wrote curriculum for the Mennonite Church, died Sept. 5. Born in Upper Leacock Township, she was the daughter of the late Elam M. and Anna Myer Wenger.

A teacher for 39 years, she retired in 1979 from Millersville University in Lancaster and spent the summer of 1981 teaching at the North Institute of Technology in Shenyang, the Peoples Republic of China. She also taught at Lancaster Mennonite School. Besides writing curriculum materials for Mennonite Publishing House, she authored histories of Groffdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church, Landis Homes Retirement Community and Eastern Mennonite Missions.

She received her bachelor's degree from Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and took additional graduate work at Temple University and the University of Delaware.

She was a member of Groffdale Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., where she was active in Sunday school and the sewing circle. Concerned about housing problems in Lancaster, Pa., she was one of the founders of Tabor Community Services.—*Lancaster Online*

The Corinthian Plan begins its third year

ELKHART, Ind.—When congregations renew their enrollment this fall in The Corinthian Plan, they will be part of a success story leaders had hoped, prayed and worked for when the Mennonite Church USA-sponsored health-coverage plan for pastors and other church workers launched three years ago.

The plan has 450 participating congregations, 75 that have received assistance through the plan's Fair Balance Fund, and 25 church plants with benefits for their planters and pastors.

Participating congregations have contributed more than $1 million over the past three years to the Fair Balance Fund that helps smaller congregations with the cost of providing coverage for their pastors.

Juanita Nuñez, co-pastor with her husband Eligio Nuñez at Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer, Apopka, Fla., says: "Along with other Hispanic leaders, we were praying for a solution for them and their congregations that could not afford health insurance."—*Cindy Snider*

Educating for eternity

Sara Dick is associate pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Jesus does not share my squeamishness about educating for eternity.

I walk past the school motto "Educating for Eternity" daily and—daily—I am tempted to disparage it. What exactly does eternity require? Accurate arithmetic? Physical education? Bible memorization? Good spelling?

Eternity is not a subject I, as a Gen Xer, am inclined to study seriously. Having been born into a Cold War and a nation rife with greed, I haven't found eternity nearly as pressing for my attention as the troubles of this world. My peers and I are more likely to speak of eternity ironically than earnestly.

Take the 1997 movie *The Sweet Hereafter*, in which a school bus skids into a frozen lake and sinks. Many of the children are killed or severely injured, and the town is left to deal with unspeakable loss. There is nothing sweet about their hereafter, which consists only of what they can see and touch and hear—and mourn. So, too, has been my picture of the hereafter.

But Isaiah calls God "the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy" (57:15). The prophet claims that God resides not only in the current moment (the here-and-now that consumes our attention), as my generation easily assumes, but also in the eternal, and possibly sweet, hereafter.

Humph.

And Jesus? Clearly, Jesus does not share my squeamishness about educating for eternity. He educated for eternity everywhere. His followers and challengers focused on eternity in personal terms: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus is asked this question in each of the first three Gospels—twice in Luke. The Gospel of John is so chock-full of eternal life we'll have to return to it another day.

In Luke, the first person to inquire about eternal life is a lawyer testing Jesus (10:25). Eventually, the lawyer comes up with the right answer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus agrees, and then offers the story of a priest, a Levite and a Samaritan to clarify what kind of person inherits eternal life: one who offers extreme neighborliness. One who fixes lunch for a homeless family. One who listens compassionately to someone in the midst of a mess of their own making.

That's no easy curriculum to pursue. Just ask the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan.

The second person to inquire is a "certain ruler" (18:18), to whom Jesus responds by listing the Hebrew commandments as the requirements for eternal life. When the ruler affirms that he has done all those things, Jesus says there's one more thing: Sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. Moments later, Jesus adds that this requires giving up not only property but also parents and progeny, in order to receive heavenly treasure.

Again, no easy lesson plan for eternity here.

With a month or more of school already behind us, what are we about in our Sunday school classes and youth groups and worship services and community service work, if not Jesus' form of education for eternity?

Aren't we all planting seeds, the fruits of which we won't likely see in our lifetimes? Don't we educate our children for an unseen future that we hope might be more peaceful than the current times? Don't we care for the dying, even though they are not long with us now?

We take the long, long view when we sit and pray with an elder suffering from dementia. We witness to "things not (yet) seen" when we read Bible stories and Shel Silverstein poems and science books with a child.

English poet Joseph Addison wrote a very long poem, of which several verses are included in the hymn "When all Thy Mercies, O My God." Cynicism and bitterness have no place in his 18th-century style. The poem ends with verses bursting with the delight of having lived a life in service to "the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy":

Through ev'ry period of my life
thy goodness I'll pursue,
and after death, in distant worlds,
the glorious theme renew.

Through all eternity, to Thee
a joyful song I'll raise,
but, oh, eternity's too short
to utter all thy praise. TM

The danger of a single story

In a now-famous TED Talk called "The Danger of a Single Story," Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie warns against the human tendency to describe a people (or a tradition or an individual) on the basis of a single story.

Reading only British children's books while growing up in Nigeria, for example, led Adichie to assume that fiction was populated exclusively by white children who ate apples and played in the snow. Only much later did she realize that brown-skinned children eating mangos might also be worthy subjects of literature.

When Adichie came to college in the United States, her roommate could scarcely believe that middle-class, educated Africans existed—the African story she knew, based on news reports and vague impressions, required characters who were poor, hungry and illiterate. Describing a group with a single story, Adichie insists, is an exercise of power. "The single story creates stereotypes. The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

Adichie's concern is not new, perhaps especially to Mennonites. Only a few decades ago, standard accounts of the Reformation refused to recognize the Anabaptists as legitimate actors in the history of the church. And Mennonite historians themselves have debated vigorously over whether Anabaptism itself should be described as a unified, heroic narrative or as a host of intertwining, competing—and sometimes even contradictory—stories.

This is why the recent publication *The Jesus Tribe: Grace Stories from Congo's Mennonites, 1912- 2012* (Institute of Mennonite Studies/ISGA, 2012) is so significant. Between 2009 and 2011, a group of Congolese Mennonite researchers set out to gather stories that would tell the history of their churches, now numbering some 225,000 members.

The project faced enormous challenges: the cultural complexities of engaging eight different ethnic groups; the travel logistics of reaching remote villages on muddy roads; the time-consuming work of transcribing, translating and editing the interviews; and then the daunting task of selecting from 500 interviews the 88 stories included the new volume. The result is not only a collection of entertaining, informative stories. At a much deeper level, *The Jesus Tribe* offers a powerful witness to the necessity of multiple stories.

Many of the shelves in my office are heavy with books on theology, history or ethics related to the Anabaptist-Mennonite story in its European or North American expression. From the 16th century to the present, it would seem, the arc of Anabaptist history is an unfolding narrative about, well, us—our experiences, thoughts, conflicts, deeds and mission efforts. Yet the stories in *The Jesus Tribe* describe a dynamic, expanding Anabaptist church that looks different from the tale I usually tell. Encountering the history of the Mennonite Church of Congo or the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo should challenge North American Mennonites to rethink what it means to tell "our" story.

In a similar way, the stories gathered in *The Jesus Tribe* should complicate the way we interpret the history of Anabaptist churches in the global South. The occasion for the book was the 100th anniversary of the arrival of Mennonite missionaries to the Congo, and many of the stories appropriately relate experiences told from the missionary perspective. But most of the stories in the collection are written by Congolese, describing the work of Congolese pastors, missionaries, lay leaders, hymn writers, doctors and teachers who oversaw a period of sustained growth in the Congolese Mennonite church long after the missionaries were formally expelled in 1960. North American missionaries never disappear entirely from the narrative, but they are no longer the lead characters in the drama.

Finally, readers of *The Jesus Tribe* will discover that the internal history of the Congolese Mennonite church cannot be told as a single story. Beneath the moving stories of generosity, sacrifice, courage and faithfulness runs a fierce, persistent undercurrent of church conflict—conflicts over money and property, over ecclesial offices and authority, and, most recently, over practices such as the ordination of women. Where there is conflict, there is always more than one story. Indeed, here one might have wished for even more stories that would make the conflicts more understandable.

Centennial celebrations are almost always the occasion for an "official" history. Instead, Congolese Mennonites have blessed the global church with a multitude of stories. As Adichie concludes, "when we realize there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise." TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Encountering the history of the Mennonite Church of Congo or the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo should challenge North American Mennonites to rethink what it means to tell "our" story.

The pernicious hiddenness of racism in politics

Mennonite Church USA is committed to becoming an antiracist church. One of the things that makes that difficult is that racism, like many systems and like the "powers" described in the New Testament, is pernicious and likes to remain hidden from our awareness. Part of becoming antiracist is to keep our awareness of racism alive.

The opposite of that awareness is denial, and such denial runs rampant in our society. We like to pretend we aren't as racist as we may be. A recent article in *The Atlantic* (September) helps call us to task.

In "Fear of a Black President," Ta-Nehisi Coates, a senior editor at the magazine, writes that as our first black president, Barack Obama has avoided mention of race almost entirely. He goes on: "In having to be 'twice as good' and 'half as black,' Obama reveals the false promise and double standard of integration."

The fact that Americans elected a black president is often cited as evidence that we have moved beyond race as a factor in our politics. But that notion is shown to be false.

This does not mean that opposing policies of the Obama administration signifies racism. Racism is a much subtler system.

Coates points to an irony of the United States: "For most of American history, our political system was premised on two conflicting facts—one, an oft-stated love of democracy; the other, an undemocratic white supremacy inscribed at every level of government."

Coates shows this irony in the events around the death of Trayvon Martin last February. As soon as Obama addressed the parents and said, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon," the case moved from a kind of national mourning to what Coates calls "racialized political fodder," and he gives numerous examples.

Historically, Coates writes, African Americans have been limited to protest and agitation in addressing the disconnect between democracy and white supremacy. Now, when Obama pledged to "get to the bottom of what happened" in the Martin case, he was not appealing to federal power—he was employing it. "The power was black," Coates writes, "and, in certain quarters, was received as such."

"Racism is not merely a simplistic hatred," Coates writes. "It is, more often, broad sympathy toward some and broader skepticism toward others." He notes several studies that have shown the role of race in voting patterns and in opposition to and support for health-care reform. After Obama's election, the rhetoric of fear became much more prevalent. Signs at Tea Party rallies read, "Obama plans white slavery," and one congressman complained that Obama "favors the black person."

The double standard of having to be twice as good "haunts and constrains the Obama presidency, warning him away from candor about America's sordid birthmark." Coates points out that in the first two years as president, "Obama talked less about race than any other Democratic president since 1961."

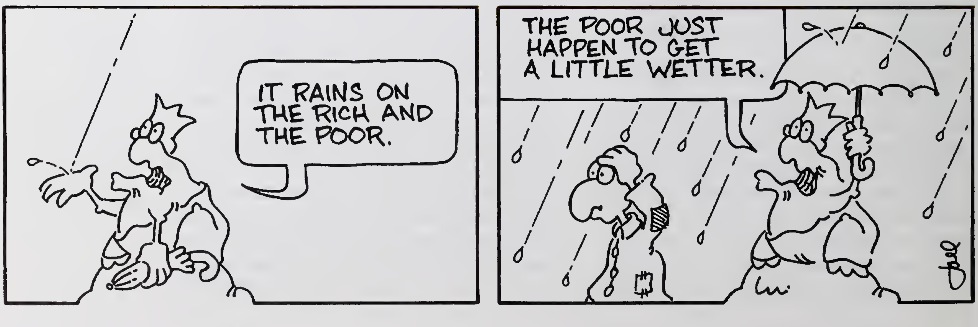
The myth of "twice as good," writes Coates, "holds that African Americans—enslaved, tortured, raped, discriminated against and subjected to the most lethal homegrown terrorist movement in American history—feel no anger toward their tormentors."

Coates makes clear he does not agree with all of Obama's views. He particularly abhors his embrace of a secretive drone policy. His point is about the pernicious presence of racism in our politics. "Race is not simply a portion of the Obama story," he writes. "It is the lens through which many Americans view all his politics."

The problem goes beyond politics and affects—infects—every area of society. Love, not fear, should guide us.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


IT RAINS ON THE RICH AND THE POOR.
THE POOR JUST HAPPEN TO GET A LITTLE WETTER.
Joel

—compiled by Gordon Houser

> “With the exception of the imperial offspring of the Ming dynasty and the dauphins of prerevolutionary France, contemporary American kids may represent the most indulged young people in the history of the world.”—Elizabeth Kolbert in *The New Yorker*

Africa’s children are living longer

Africa’s children are living longer, and some experts are calling it “the biggest, best story in development,” says *The Economist*. Dramatic drops in child mortality have been recorded in numerous African countries, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and Kenya. The child-mortality rate (the number of deaths of children under 5 per 1,000 live births) has been dropping by almost 5 percent a year in many countries, and up to 8-10 percent a year in a few others. Experts say a combination of broad economic growth and specific public-health policies has helped produce this scenario. One such policy is the increased use of insecticide-treated bednets, which Mennonite Economic Development Associates has been in the forefront of expanding.—*The Marketplace*

Court upholds Georgia ban on guns in church

A federal appeals court has upheld Georgia’s ban on bringing guns into places of worship. The Rev. Jonathan Wilkins, a Baptist pastor, and a gun-rights group had argued that church members should have the right to carry guns into worship services to protect the congregation, but the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled July 20 that a Georgia law adopted in 2010 does not violate the Thomaston congregation’s First and Second Amendment rights.—*Religion News Service*

The sea level is rising three to four times faster than the world average on the East Coast of the United States, from Cape Hatteras, N.C., to Cape Cod, Mass., because of melting ice sheets and the fact that warmer expands. The rise ranges from 2.8 inches at New York City to 4.8 inches at Norfolk, Va.—*Associated Press*

Churches address higher utility costs

Churches buffeted by bigger utility bills are searching for solutions. In Chicago, churches accustomed to free water usage face new costs (like expensive water meters) as the cash-strapped city gradually eliminates the perk by 2015. In Washington, D.C., churches are joining a money-saving effort with mosques, synagogues and other community nonprofits to jointly buy electricity for their facilities. Last year, 11 religious institutions saved nearly $100,000 by purchasing electricity together. This year, nearly 120 groups are expected to collectively buy more than $5 million worth of power.—*Christianity Today*

Numbers to ponder

- Estimated cost of the 2012 London Olympics: **$14.1 billion**
- Estimated cost of the 2004 Athens Olympics: **$1.6 billion**
- Actual cost of the 2004 Athens Olympics: **$16 billion**
- Number of buildings built for the Athens Olympics: **22**
- Number of those buildings still in use: **1**
- Number of times New York City police stopped and frisked black and Latino kids ages 14-18 in 2011: **120,000**
- Population of black and Latino kids ages 14-18 in New York City: **177,000**

—*Yes! Magazine*

Report shows Islam’s global diversity

Nearly all Muslims can agree on the basic beliefs of Islam: There is one God, Muhammad is God’s prophet, Muslims should fast during the holy month of Ramadan and give alms to the poor, yet beyond these central pillars of the faith, Muslims worldwide vastly differ as religious convictions are shaped by cultural and social contexts, according to a new report by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. “The World’s Muslims: Unity and Diversity” draws on 38,000 face-to-face interviews in 39 countries and finds that Muslims differ sharply over questions of faith like who counts as a Muslim and what spiritual practices are acceptable.—*Religion News Service*

9 simple steps

to improve your health (without joining a gym)

1. **Laugh to your heart’s delight**
2. **Age artfully**
3. **Work with friends**
4. **Get a massage**
5. **Eat your carotenoids**
6. **Chat with neighbors**
7. **Sleep more**
8. **Scrub without toxins**
9. **Hope like your life depends on it**

—*Yes! Magazine*

The power of story

Sociologist Bob Brenneman brings to life stories of ex-gang members in Central America.

Bob Brenneman on Lake Champlain, Vt. Photo provided

by Gordon Houser

Bob Brenneman believes in the power of story. His own story moves from growing up in a rural church in southern Michigan to Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., to Guatemala to Notre Dame (Ind.) University, where he completed a doctoral program in the sociology of religion. His dissertation has been published by Oxford University Press as the book *Homies and Hermanos: God and Gangs in Central America* (see box on page 14).

Born in Pennsylvania, Bob moved to Michigan, where his parents helped Bob's grandfather, who had started the North Wayne Mennonite Church (near Dowagiac, Mich.) as a church plant of the Conservative Mennonite Conference. Later Bob's father served as pastor of the church.

In 1993, Bob began studies at EMU, where he majored in English and theater and minored in Spanish. During his four years there, he spent a semester in Guatemala at the CASAS program, in which students learn Spanish and live with a local family.

I wanted to dignify the person telling his story and in the process change the one hearing the story.—Bob Brenneman

After graduating from EMU in 1997, Bob returned to Guatemala and worked with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for four years. There he met Gaby Ochoa, now his wife.

He became interested in studying at seminary and spent one semester at Associated (now Anabaptist) Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., in 2001, before returning to Guatemala, where he and Gaby married.

Pentecostalism: In 2003, he decided to study sociology of religion and enrolled in the graduate program at Notre Dame. He had read such authors as Peter Berger, Robert Wuthnow and Christian Smith and wanted to understand better the interplay of religion and society. He also studied liberation theology and Pentecostalism.

"Sociology emphasizes method and quantitative analysis," he says. He thought that provided a better understanding of what's going on in religion. He also hoped to get a theological degree at AMBS and took several more courses there. But once his children, Nicolás, who's now 6, and Gabo, 4, were born, he gave up that goal.

Eventually, he needed to choose a dissertation topic. He was interested in studying foot-washing practices of Mennonites and published an article in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. But his advisor talked him into focusing on another topic that interested him: gangs in Central America.

During his service with MCC, he had met an MCC worker from Colombia, Ricardo Borres, who worked with the Honduran church on reconciliation between warring gangs. But Bob had not dealt with them firsthand.

He returned to Guatemala and collected data in 2007 and 2008. As his book describes, he interviewed 63 former gang members who had chosen to leave that life. Many joined a church, usually an evangelical or Pentecostal church in their city or town.

But Bob did more than collect data. He told many of these (mostly) men's and women's stories. He begins each chapter of the book with a story of a former gang member. "I didn't want to just use quotes to make a point," he says. "I wanted to dignify the person telling his story and in the process change the one hearing the story."

Global capitalism: Writing the book changed him as well, he says. And it helped him resist change. Academia tends to pull a person toward success and a safe environment, he says. But the book pulled him back "into caring about the plight of those being ground under by global capitalism." ▶

Bob Brenneman holding son Gabo, with Gaby, his wife, and son Nicolás
Photo provided

Brenneman and his sons in a protest march in Burlington, Vt. Photo provided

He has become more aware of the vast chasm between the opportunities he and his students have and what those young people he interviewed in Central America have who are tempted to join gangs. "I realize how privileged I am and how deeply divided the world is" between those who have so much and those who have so little.

What enables these gang members to leave their gangs, at the risk of their lives, and join a church? The churches are there, first of all, in the communities where these people live. The churches tend to stress transformation and see this as a social process, not just a psychological change. The churches also emphasize community, discipleship and nonviolence.

While most of these churches are evangelical or what we would call Pentecostal, the Honduran Mennonite Church has been involved in working with ex-gang members for many years. Bob says their ministry is among the most holistic and effective of all he witnessed.

Kevlar vest: What these churches do is carry out ministry in their social location. For many middle-class, North American Mennonite churches, that would not usually include gangs. However, Bob has observed the ministry of a Spanish-speaking Mennonite congregation in Cicero, Ill., with gangs in its neighborhood. The primary staff person for such work is the church's youth pastor, who wears a Kevlar vest to work, Bob says. The church held a peace walk in its neighborhood and offered a free concert.

Bob, who is a member of Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Ind., now teaches at St. Michael's College in Burlington, Vt. And he takes students to Guatemala when he can.

He continues to believe "in the power of story to shape and transform people and communities." Through his book and his teaching he hopes to "give voice to those caught in the struggle against greed and violence, which make them feel invisible and inaudible."

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

Homies and Hermanos: God and Gangs in Central America by Robert Brenneman (Oxford University Press, 2012), though based on a doctoral dissertation, is written clearly and includes enough storytelling to engage the average reader. Most of us, I imagine, carry impressions from our media about gangs that aren't always accurate and help distance us from the fact that these are human beings with complex lives. Brenneman delves into the history of the "northern triangle" of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and shows how transnational gangs originated in the United States. As Brenneman writes, "Poverty, precarious family structures ruptured by war and deportation, the prison-ghetto connection, and the rise of 'social cleansing' all played a role in the emergence of the transnational gangs of Central America." Gangs don't come out of midair but reflect the "pyramid of privilege typical throughout Central American society." "Social cleansing" refers to the extrajudicial execution of gang members and other "undesirable" youth. The odds of leaving a gang and surviving are long. As one gang leader says, the only way to get out is in "your pine-box suit" (coffin). Once out, the ex-gang member, with his identifying tattoos, faces the prejudice of a society that generally supports social cleansing. Nevertheless, many have successfully made the change through religious conversion and joining local churches that emphasize transformation. Brenneman ably explores this transformation from "homie" (fellow gang member) to "hermano" (brother in Christ). He provides a powerful witness to this needed ministry.—*gh*

HOMIES + HERMANOS
GOD AND GANGS IN CENTRAL AMERICA
ROBERT BRENNEMAN

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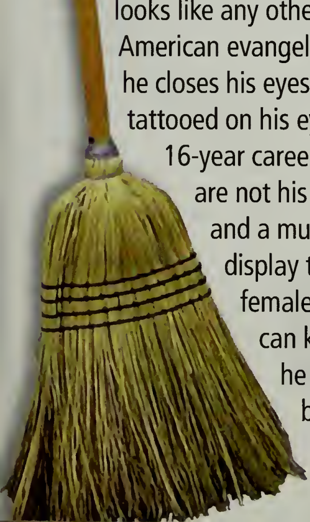
Gangs and evangelical masculinity in Central America

Swords into brooms

by Robert Brenneman

In his long-sleeved, buttoned-down shirt, Juan José Gomez looks like any other Central American evangelical hermano (brother in Christ)—until he closes his eyes. That's when the letters "W" and "F," tattooed on his eyelids, become visible, announcing his 16-year career with the White Fence gang. And these are not his only tattoos. Teardrops under his left eye and a mural of tattoos on his arms and torso display the gang ideology—from gravestones to female genitalia and marijuana. But these he can keep hidden under his long sleeves, which he wears whenever he leaves the marginal barrio of his Guatemala City home.



▶

After all, as an ex-gang member, Juan José wants to avoid the fate of those like his friend Antonio, a former member of 18th Street gang whom I also interviewed in Guatemala City in 2007 while researching for my book on gang exit (see review, page 14). Antonio was an energetic, articulate 23-year-old, fully determined to atone for the violence of his past by quietly managing a shoe repair business. "I still have problems with the gang," he told me. "I have a green light [death warrant] for years now, and if they haven't killed me yet it's because God is great."

That was in July. By late September Antonio was dead—killed by a gunshot at close range. It was the third attempt on his life.

Most men in the barrio—gang member or not—wouldn't be caught dead doing such "women's work."

Deaths like Antonio's are all too common in northern Central America. Newspapers announce a litany of gang-related killings, many of them aimed at eliminating former rivals or punishing gang "deserters." By now, readers expect, and some even celebrate, them. In an all-too-typical response to an "update" on gang killings reporting nine deaths in a single weekend, one reader of Guatemala's *El Periodico* responded: "That's great! This is news to lift your spirits."

'Social cleansing': Frustrated by the inability of their government to rein in violence, too many Central Americans have embraced the idea that "social cleansing"—the elimination of gang members through extrajudicial execution—is the only way to reduce gang violence. The odds aren't good for gang members. But even those who have renounced the gang and its deeply violent lifestyle—or would like to—are under threat. In fact, they are doubly damned. By abandoning the gang, they risk becoming victims of a "green light" issued by gang leaders trying to discourage desertion among their most experienced "soldiers." But ex-gang members also fear the police, the hit men and their former rivals when they forfeit the protection of their former "homies."

So far, Juan José, or "JJ" as his friends call him, has fared better. Unlike Antonio, JJ is an active member of an evangelical congregation and wears his hermano identity on his sleeve. In 2008, he married his partner in a formal church wedding, and he actively promotes Jesus as the alternative to gang life among the young boys of his barrio. When I met him during my research in 2007, he worked for a Charismatic Catholic businessman who believed in second chances. In fact, young converts like JJ were in abundance at gang intervention programs throughout Central America.

After all, no one is more committed to identity transformation than the churches that announce, "Jesus can save anyone." But the small, evangelical-Pentecostal congregations of the barrio offer more than a slogan. They offer a support group and an alternative masculinity that starkly contrasts with the hyper-masculinity of the gang's vida loca of violent bravado, drug abuse and sex-as-conquest. Not that evangelical masculinity is free of patriarchy. Male "headship" is well-preserved in evangelical churches and families. Still, the contrast with traditional "macho" norms of the barrio is hard to miss. Rarely have I been as surprised as when a Honduran pastor introduced me to an ex-gang member as the young man quietly swept the floor of the little church where he attended. Most men in the barrio—gang member or not—wouldn't be caught dead doing such "women's work."

Hermano: Fortunately for JJ and many others like him, the highly visible nature of evangelical masculinity has the advantage of underscoring the ex-gang member's commitment to his new identity as an hermano. Even gang leaders claim to "respect" evangelical converts, extending them a "pass" on the "green light" usually applied to deserters—so long as the convert remains committed. (If they should stray, then all bets are off.)

It isn't likely that Central America's growing evangelical congregations will arrest the region's soaring street violence. The social sources of the violence are too deep and too complex to be resolved with individualistic spiritual solutions. But for former gang members like JJ, desperate for safety and a modicum hope, the hermanos present an attractive option. And evangelical pastors aren't the only ones hoping more gang members decide to drop their guns and pick up a broom.

Robert Brenneman is assistant professor of sociology at Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vt. His book from Oxford University Press is titled Homies and Hermanos: God and Gangs in Central America.

QUESTIONS FOR women leaders

There is too much at stake not to utilize every person God has equipped.—Joanne Dietzel

Joanne Dietzel is Lancaster Mennonite Conference coordinator, lay minister of worship at Ridgeview Mennonite Church, worship leader, and a part-time nontraditional student at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Lancaster, Pa. She has served on Constituency Leaders Council; as lay minister of administration at Ridgeview Mennonite Church; as administrative assistant and dorm adviser at Lancaster Mennonite High School; as administrative assistant at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and as worship leader at CLC and at the Mennonite Church USA delegate sessions in 2003.

Do or did you have a woman leader as a mentor?

I feel blessed to have encountered many mentors in each new phase of life—women offering advice, seeing and naming my gifts and strengths, being open and honest, sharing their stories and struggles, and serving as models. These women include one who shared with me in a "Paul-Timothy" program as a young adult; Charlotte Holsopple Glick, who modeled a love for ministry; Miriam Martin, who helped me learn the structure and work of Mennonite Church USA; Lee Snyder, who encouraged me to take classes; Lee Schmucker, who helps me understand my leadership strengths and weaknesses, and two women in my congregation who continue to listen and ask insightful questions. Often I worked mostly with men. I would be remiss not to mention their impact on my life in areas of trust, confidence, opportunities, suggestions, critique, responsibility and empowerment.

Are you mentoring young women who may be potential church leaders?

I hope I have been and will continue to be a mentor in my daughter's life. It has been a joy to see her gifts develop and used freely in ministry in her job and congregation. I appreciate when we can seek each other's advice and counsel, rejoice and lament in our experiences.

If so, how is her (their) experience the same or different from yours?

My daughter grew up seeing women involved in all aspects of the church and culture and encounters few difficulties in her church and ministry experience as a woman. I am grateful the atmosphere is different (and continues to change) regarding women in leadership—she is not experiencing a "closed" system. The church and society are more ready to receive and support women as leaders, and many more women and men are working toward this change.

What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?

I have not always valued my own gifts and strengths. At times it has felt lonely. I struggle knowing when to speak and when to be quiet, especially in the support and inclusion of women. I've been misunderstood by both women (not being strong/vocal enough) and men (coming across too strong or damaging the status quo of male leadership) and not been understood why I continue to work in this particular church organization. I rejoice in the gains of women in ministry but remain realistic about the challenges that remain. I've been misunderstood as one who is only seeking rights for women rather than advocating for the development and use of the gifts given to women by the Holy Spirit.

When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?

Leadership is enhanced by the presence and gifts of women—we often bring a new perspective and understanding, creativity and a different style. Shared ministry—it's not about women in ministry or men in ministry. There is too much at stake not to utilize every person God has equipped. Christ calls each of us to ministry, the gifts and graces of all (affirmed, utilized and developed in mutual sharing as we join in God's activity in the world).

Erin Groff | 2012 TM Photo Contest Entrant

The calling

by Ryan Ahlgrim

I was sitting at a lunch table in my high school cafeteria across from a pretty blond girl whom I hoped would take a greater interest in me. "I'm thinking about becoming a pastor," I told her.

Perhaps our calling is not our occupation but something that happens within and beyond it.

"Have you received a calling from God?" she asked me.

"What do you mean?"

"Has God given you a sign that he wants you to be a pastor?"

"No."

"Then you can't be a pastor—not unless you get a special calling from God."

I had never heard of such an idea. I thought a divine calling was mostly limited to prophets in the Old Testament. Couldn't I be a pastor simply because I wanted to be? Did I have to be knocked down by a blinding light or see a burning bush before I could legitimately pursue pastoral training?

I wanted to be a pastor because the job looked appealing to me. While in high school and college, various people, including my pastors, encouraged me. They said I'd be good at it. I never received divine confirmation of that opinion but went to seminary anyway.

During my first year in seminary, in a class called Personality and Religious Experience, the professor gave us a form to fill out. One of the questions was, "What have been your numinous experiences?" Numinous experiences? I had to look up "numinous" in the dictionary, and even then I wasn't sure I understood the question. Were visions or mystical experiences part of the prerequisites for becoming a proper pastor? Couldn't I just want to be a pastor?

Actually, no. It wasn't enough just for me to want to be a pastor; other people had to want me to be a pastor, too—otherwise I'd never find a church to pastor or receive credentials. But it seems to me that the support of my pastors, congregation and conference was a bit different from what's usually meant by a "divine calling." In my first pastorate I learned that believing one has a divine calling to pastoral ministry can be a curse. Matt began attending my church to find healing for his wounds. He was under a perpetual cloud of guilt. As he told me, "When I was in Bible college, they were always pushing us to become missionaries or pastors. They convinced us this was God's calling on our lives. But I ran away from that calling. I didn't want to be a missionary or a pastor. But all these years I've felt like I've let God down and my life is a failure."

Matt worked at a job that made use of his natural talents, but he still felt guilty. Time and again he would investigate going to seminary to become trained as a pastor, but he could never bring himself to follow through with his plans. He was in an eternal bind: unable to force himself into ministry and unable to accept the occupation he was in. So he continued a sad, shadow existence, incapable of becoming whole.

Finally I told Matt the truth about his pastoral calling. We sat in a rundown Dairy Queen, sipping chocolate shakes, while he rehearsed his old lament. Then I said to him, "Matt, let me tell you something I've never told you before: Thank God you never became a pastor. If you had become a pastor—knowing you the way I do—you would have been a disaster. Believe me: You were not called by God to become a pastor."

Matt looked at me, stunned. "You know, no one has ever told me that. Thank you."

Our divine calling is Christ's calling: to be his disciples in whatever circumstances or occupations we may be in.

I wonder if we haven't gotten this concept of God's calling all turned around. Perhaps our calling (in the divine sense) is not our occupation. Instead, we choose our occupation. We "follow our bliss," as Joseph Campbell said. We pursue an occupation that will express our deepest passions and interests. But our divine calling is something that happens within that occupation and beyond it. Our divine calling is Christ's calling: to be his disciples in whatever circumstances or occupations we may be in.

When I was a teenager, I believed God had one woman picked out for me somewhere in the world whom I was supposed to marry. I was filled with anxiety over how I was going to correctly identify "the one," because if I made a mistake, my God-ordained life would be ruined. But during a course in Marriage and Family Therapy in seminary, my professor said, "We are not designed for one particular marriage partner. There are any number of people we will meet in our lives with whom we could be happily married." I have come to believe this is also true for our occupations. There are a number of occupations I might have chosen: archeologist, high school teacher, college professor or writer. I would have been good at any of them and been content, and God would have been pleased.

I chose to become a pastor, but my divine calling has been to ask myself each day, "What kind of pastor should I be? What does God want me to do as each situation comes up?"

When I graduated from seminary, I began looking for a pastorate. But I was dating a divorced woman at the time, and no Mennonite congregation would hire me. I ended up being hired by a Bible study group that was exploring becoming a church plant. And so my first pastorate involved doing what I had never intended or been trained to do: plant a church. When I had imagined my first pastorate, I had pictured an impressive building with a sizable congregation, and me sitting in my office being—comfortable. Instead my calling was to do the grunt work of helping start a church from scratch.

> We often pick our occupation, but we do not pick our calling. Our calling is the unseen need around the next blind corner of our lives.

While ministering in my next pastorate, I received a letter from a stranger—an inmate at the local county jail. He had met some Mennonites who impressed him, so he wondered if a Mennonite pastor could come visit him. I did so, and that began three years of visiting John every other week. When he was released, I was relieved. I was looking forward to not visiting the jail anymore. I didn't like those metal doors clanging shut behind me. I didn't like the unfriendly guards and colorless walls. Visiting jail was always a soul-sucking experience for me.

But John said to me, "Ryan, I have a friend in here who doesn't get any visitors and I think he'd really appreciate your visits. Would you visit him?" I said yes. So I began visiting Dan on a regular basis; and when Dan was released, he asked me if I would visit his friend Brian. And so it went on. Over the years I have been inside 15 jails and prisons. I never intended to have a jail ministry. I never wanted a jail ministry. But these are the people God put in my path, and as a disciple of Jesus it was my calling to respond faithfully to each. In addition, five members of my congregation have spent time in jail or prison while I've been their pastor. All those previous jail visits prepared me for caring for my own sheep.

When those great heroes in the Bible heard the calling of God, it usually did not change their occupations; it changed how they lived their lives within and beyond those occupations. Isaiah and Ezekiel remained priests, but now they had a calling to be priests in a new way. Peter was still a fisherman and Paul a tentmaker, but their calling clarified the mission of their lives.

God's call on everyone is to live for God and each other. God's calling on the Christian is to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ in every aspect and occupation of life. What exactly this will entail we cannot know ahead of time. We often pick our occupation, but we do not pick our calling. Our calling is the unseen need around the next blind corner of our lives. When we meet it, it may scare us; we may claim, like Moses and Jeremiah, that we are not trained or gifted for the task. Or it may delight us; we may, like Isaiah, shout, "Here am I, send me." But of one thing I am convinced: Our calling is not our calculation; it is God's surprise.

From time to time I ask my children, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Over the years their assorted answers have included zookeeper, veterinarian, naturalist, computer game designer and interior designer. I confess, each time I hope one of them will say, "A pastor." But those words have never been spoken and almost certainly never will be. I must restrain myself from placing on the shoulders of one of them the mantle of the pastor, of subtle hints to hear the call of God saying, "Pursue pastoral ministry."

Instead, I model for my congregation a pastor who enjoys his work. Hopefully some will be attracted to this crucial role within the church, and I will encourage those who have the unique gifts this role requires. But more importantly, I hope all in the congregation (including my children) hear the daily call of God to love when the unexpected shows up on the doorstep.

Ryan Ahlgrim is pastor of First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis.

Learning to deal with the loss of people who move away

Moving on

by Melissa S. Roth

Rarely is this good news. The pastor of your church announces she's accepted a call to a church several states away. You and your community welcomed this pastor, as you welcome all your pastors, with grace and enthusiasm and hope. It's been a great four years, and you all have been through a lot together. She helped your community come out of some hard and dark places. The church and pastor were on the way to doing some amazing ministry for building the kingdom of God. Some projects were realized. Some projects were still in the dreaming phase. Now what?

Or that great family with four children—they are going to visit the next Mennonite church up the road—the one with a larger youth program. How can they leave? Your church expanded Sunday school classes for this family. They are the most regular ones for children's story. Your church and this family have grown to love each other and supported each other. And the father is the best (only?) guitar player in the church. How can they just change churches like that?

We worship in the same denomination, Mennonite Church USA; we simply worship at different campuses.

What about that energetic college student who so inspired your church. Maybe it was her great public speaking and reading of Scripture. Or his wonderful way to engage the youth. Or the twins who played violin and piano for prelude and offertory. You and your church have spent four years providing a home away from home for these young adults. They were regular participants at the prayer meeting and Bible study. They always showed up for a service project or potluck. They became so integral to your community. They have such life and talent. Why do they have to move on?

There are the voluntary service workers, the SOOP workers, the intentional interim pastor, the family being called away to long-term mission, the family moving away for graduate school or work or retirement. The young adult moving on to worship with his new spouse at her church.

These scenarios are played out across our churches every year. It can be so difficult to let go.

Some of our communities are more practiced at letting go than others. Other communities are striving to be sustaining communities, and every leaving is painful. Sooner or later, all communities experience beloved people moving on. We live in a mobile culture.

I used to have a hard time with these kinds of transitions. A big part of my childhood wounding comes from difficult separations, which is not unusual for children who come from divorced homes or with family members with addictions and/or mental illness. So much of my pain comes from such questions as, What's wrong with me (us) that they must go? After they leave, will we see them again? What if they don't remember us or we aren't that important to them anymore. We wonder, Will we be OK with this important part of us leaving? Who will fill the gap?

As I age and grow in my faith walk, I notice that my mourning over folks moving away has become less painful. I give some credit to Facebook. I enjoy keeping in touch and knowing what is going on in my friends' lives. But much has to do with being a member of the Mennonite church. As I have traveled through churches and communities in Pennsylvania, Virginia, St. Louis, Dallas and now Colorado, I have come to count on connecting with my Mennonite friends at conferences, meetings, retreats, assemblies and relief sales. And as I learn to know more people, I find that sooner or later I will run into someone who knows Mennonites who were in my life earlier. "Oh, you know Ruth Detwiler, too? She was my first friend through MCC [Mennonite Central Committee]." And I feel connected once again.

But nothing comforts me more than knowing these folks are not changing churches. We worship in the same denomination, Mennonite Church USA; we simply worship at different campuses. All of us are brothers and sisters in Christ. All our communities come together every two years at a biennial convention. I look forward to these larger church gatherings.

However, my understanding of the wider church goes broader than even being Mennonite. I was in my last weeks in Dallas, Texas, before moving onto my new call in Colorado and was seeing my Methodist spiritual director for the last time. In the seven or so sessions we met, I grew to love and trust her and look forward to her gentle, challenging guidance. As she saw me to the door this final time, I heard the voice of my grandfather in my comment to her, "I guess we won't see each other again on this side of glory." I never said anything like that before. But we stopped and looked at each other and connected eyes. Yes, it was true. We have few avenues to meet up again in this life. Yet we both knew this was not the end for Christian sisters to meet again.

Even more than that, I am beginning to understand how each person I encounter on a spiritual level will never leave me. In fact, the longer our spirits connect, the more we become knit into the fabric of each other's being, forever influenced, love built upon love.

I remember sitting with a pastor peer who was weeping over breaking the news of an upcoming pastoral call that would take her back to her home state, to pastor a church of her youth. This city is where she raised her family. This is the state where her children and grandchildren live. The tears were for the current congregation. Would they feel let down? One of her peers remarked that congregations can take great pride in forming a beginning pastor, providing a place of nurture to strive and fail, to grow and shine. And congregations can be pleased with the way we've formed, nurtured, been served and serve folks who move on from our communities.

In what scholars call Jesus' final discourse in John's Gospel (17:20-21), Jesus is praying to God "on behalf of these" (disciples) and "also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word" (future generations, including us) "that they may all be one."

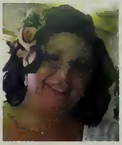
What does it mean to you that all believers have the chance that "they may all be one"?

Can we bless one another in the missions, ministries and lives that God calls us to, even when we are no longer in the same church?

When beloved friends, family, pastors, church members separate, we are not separate, are we? We worship the same God, through the same Savior, Jesus Christ. With Mennonites we worship in the same church in multiple campuses across the world. With other Christian believers, we know that Jesus came as a groom to marry and become one with his bride, the church. Jesus is not married to many churches or many brides but to one bride, the Christian church.

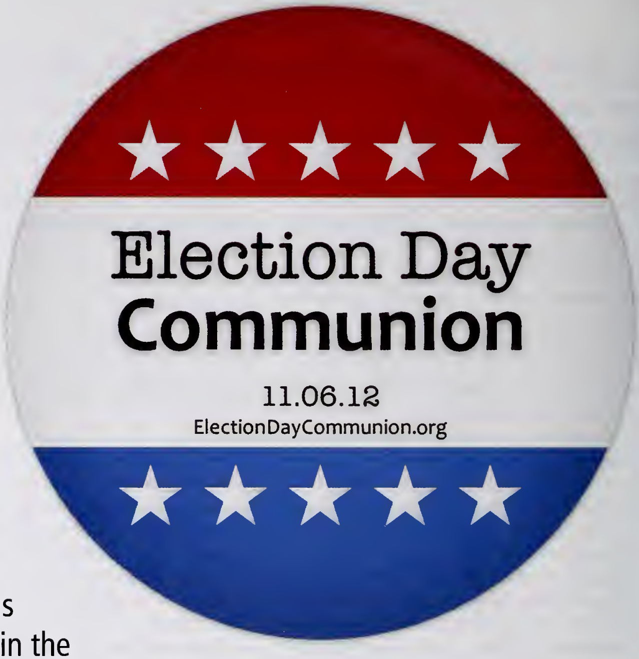
May we have confidence in Jesus' words that our friends who no longer are a part of our immediate worshiping communities have not gone. Just as we have confidence that our risen Lord is present in many worshiping communities. Again from John's Gospel (17:24): "Father, I desire that those also whom you have given me, may be with me where I am."

Can we bless one another in the missions, ministries and lives that God calls us to, even when we are no longer in the same church? Can we have confidence that we have not been left but are connected by the very Spirit God sends to advocate for us and unite us. May we see how God brings people into and out of our lives, through whom we continue to see the workings of the risen One. May we, yes, mourn their loss among us yet know they are still with us. Let us meditate, struggle and accept that Jesus' desire is that we all become one.



Melissa S. Roth is pastor of Mountain Community Mennonite Church in Palmer Lake, Colo.

Have we allowed our preference for president to interrupt our communion with God and each other?



It is Tuesday evening, Nov. 4, 2008. I am alone, and the church building is dark except for the light in the basement kitchen. As I prepare the baskets for the bread and fill each thimble-sized cup with juice, I silently repeat the words that will accompany the eating and drinking to come: "This is the body of Christ, broken for you; this is the cup of the new covenant in Christ's blood."

Communion interrupted

by Mark Schloneger

The more I repeat these words, the more it seems I can hear these words being spoken. To me. My spirit is stilled, my mind is at rest, my body is calm. I am at peace. As I prepare for Communion, I am aware that I am in the presence of the Holy.

The phone rings, rings, rings. I reflexively turn to answer, leaving behind the bread and the cups.

It's Sarah Palin. Her recorded voice tells me the polls are still open. Virginia is still too close to call. John McCain still needs me. I can still make my voice heard, she says. But not on this call, I think. This unsolicited robocall has left no room for my voice.

Like Barack and Joe, John and Sarah want my vote, not my voice. They want my vote, not my thoughts. They want my vote, not my reasons. They want my vote, not my convictions, not my passions, not my faith. I don't blame them. On Election Day, they count votes, not voices.

As I return to the bread and the cups on the kitchen counter, I think about how fitting it was to receive Sarah's call as I set the table for the Lord's Supper. The practice of Communion is an inherently political act. It is both a pledge of allegiance to Jesus and a protest against the powers and principalities that lay claim on our bodies, minds and souls. Politics belongs in the church, for we are to place all things under the lordship of Jesus. But we have abandoned Christ's call to Communion for the siren's song of political parties promising protection, prosperity and peace.

Haven't we allowed our preference for president to interrupt our communion with God and each other? Haven't we made the same mistake that Sarah made, allowing our votes to carry proxy for our voices and our bodies? Haven't we given our passions to those of political parties rather than to the passion of Jesus? Doesn't the amount of time, attention, tweets and Facebook posts given to the presidential election indicate the power we both covet and fear? Perhaps our answers to these questions betray our confession of Jesus, Lord and Savior.

The bread and the cup are God's antidotes to our ballot box idolatry. Amid attack ads and robocalls and lies and fear-mongering, we quickly forget God's choice for the transfer of power. The Lord's Supper calls us back to the table inscribed with memory.

At the table, we remember that the power to redeem, to save and to transform does not come from atop the seat of power but from within the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, this power dwells within us. As one body, we continue the mission of Jesus: preaching good news to the poor, freeing the captives, giving sight to the blind, releasing the oppressed and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor. This mission ultimately has been given to the body, not the ballot. It will continue regardless of the succession of presidential power.

Communion is a political act, both a pledge of allegiance to Jesus and a protest against the powers and principalities that lay claim on our bodies, minds and souls.

At the table, we remember the greatest commandment to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and the equally important commandment to love our neighbor as ourself. Jesus fulfilled these commandments with his body and his blood. Our votes are weak imposters of our voices and pale imitations of our bodies.

At the table, we re-member the body of Christ as the body of Christ, confessing the sin that separates us from God and each other. Our votes—the votes that truly matter—begin, end and continue as we live in faithful, joyful communion with God and each other.

This is the body of Christ, broken for you; this is the cup of the new covenant in Christ's blood.

I use a cooking syringe to fill the cups circling the silver-plated Communion trays. How appropriate, I think, to be using a syringe to inject the juice that is the sign for Christ's blood. We need Christ's blood in our veins, carrying throughout our body the death of Christ so that we may know the life of Christ more fully.

Our votes—the votes that truly matter—begin, end and continue as we live in faithful, joyful communion with God and each other.

It's time for Communion. The lights in the church building are on, music is playing, and the bread and the cups are on the table in front. On this Election Day, we have made different choices for different reasons, hoping for different results. But as our votes are counted, we are making the same, different choice together: to gather around one table as one body with the same host.

This is the body of Christ, broken for you; this is the cup of the new covenant in Christ's blood.

Again, I hear these words spoken to me as I speak them to others. My spirit is stilled, my mind is at rest, my body is calm. I am at peace. At the table, with my sisters and brothers, I am in the presence of the Holy.

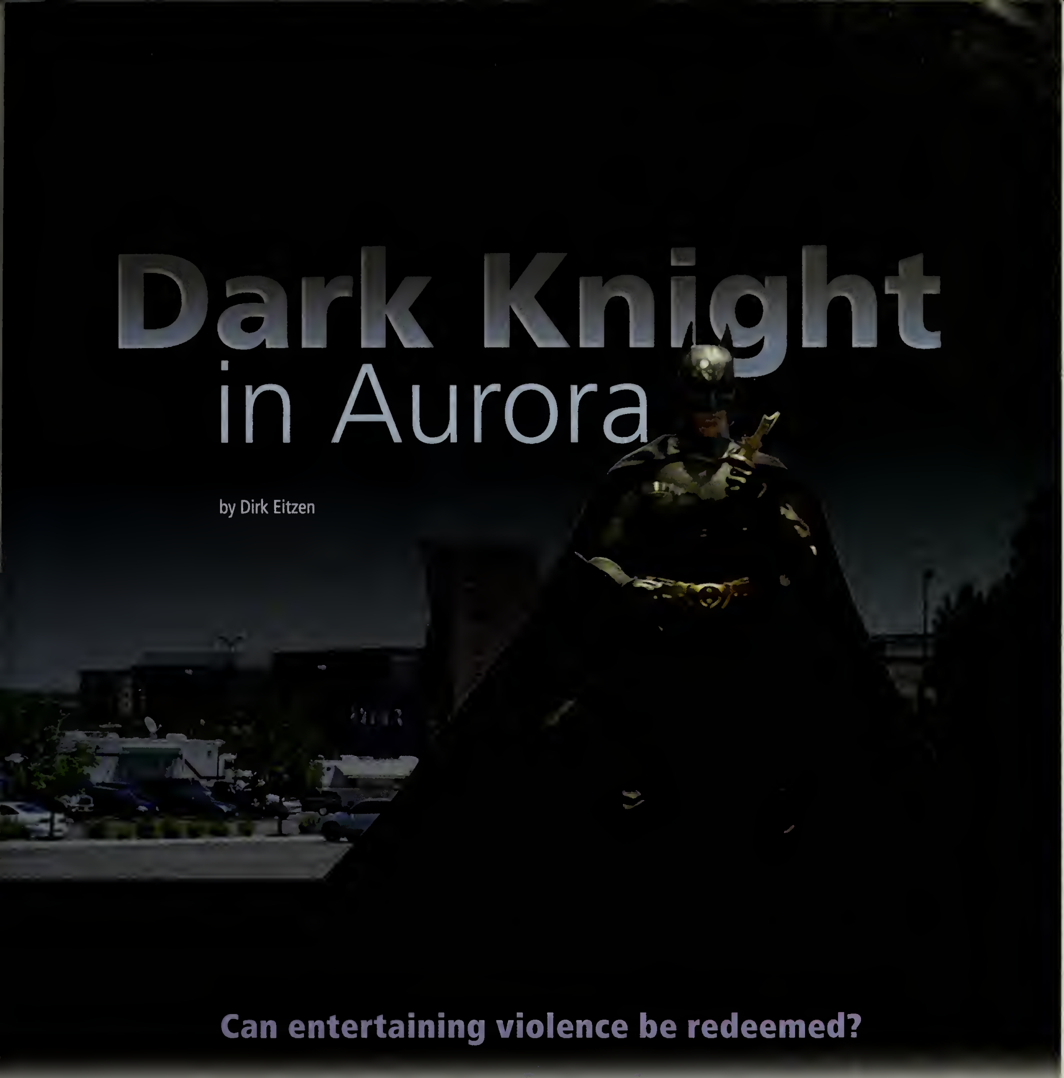
It's now 2012. Election Day is Nov. 6, and I am again preparing for a Communion service that evening. This time, many congregations of many denominations and many states are preparing for Communion, too. Will you join us? I hope so. That day is shaping up to be a good day to remember. And in a season that so easily divides us, may we find that preparing for Communion cannot be separated from its practice.

Mark Schloneger is pastor of North Goshen Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. Learn more about the Election Day Communion Campaign at www.ElectionDayCommunion.org.

Wilford D. Yoder | 2010 TM Photo Contest Entrant

Dark Knight in Aurora

by Dirk Eitzen



Can entertaining violence be redeemed?

The Aurora, Colo., shooting reminds us, once again, of the connection between violent entertainments and our culture of violence. A disturbed young man broke into a movie theater during the opening screening of the new Batman movie, *The Dark Knight Rises*, armed with an array of guns, and shot randomly into the crowd, killing 12 people and injuring dozens more. ▶

There is no way the movie can be said to have caused the shooting. Still, it is no accident that the shooting occurred at *The Dark Knight Rises*—an extremely violent movie—as opposed to a screening of *Moonrise Kingdom* or *Ice Age: Continental Drift.*

The goal for the follower of Christ is not to avoid all thoughts of violence but to act peaceably and help others act peaceably.

Watching movies like *The Dark Knight Rises* puts images of violence in people's minds—images that are exciting and appealing. These can spill over into the real world, in children's play, for instance, which is likely to feature not just batmobiles and capes but pretend guns and fisticuffs. They can subtly color viewers' attitudes toward real-world violence, too, making it seem exciting and appealing, for example, or masking its hurtful consequences. But it is an error to suppose that this process is one way: that movies do things to us. The fact is we do things with movies. We are actors in the equation. Even children are. We do not just soak up bad ideas. We respond to them, reflect on them and can turn them around. Entertaining dark ideas can have good and healthy outcomes as well as harmful ones.

Stories can contribute to a culture of violence, but at their best they also have the power to inspire us, motivate us, fortify us and improve us. Even graphic and disturbing stories about horrible violence can have this power. I think, for example, of the movies *Boys Don't Cry*, about the brutal murder of a homosexual, and *Hotel Rwanda*, about a genocide. Granted, *The Dark Knight Rises* is not that kind of movie. It's an action movie, based on a comic book. It is supposed to entertain, not edify. Even so, the movie is designed to make us experience empathy, often in unexpected places. For example, at the end of the movie, we discover that the villain is not quite the monster we supposed and we see a tear drip down his face. Still, the movie is shot through with extreme violence. At no point is this violence something we are supposed to think about or question; it is just part of the formula. It is portrayed as a necessity. In this regard, *The Dark Knight Rises* surely supports and sustains a culture of violence. The crucial question is what are we supposed to do about that, as pacifists and followers of Christ?

It may be worth remembering here that Jesus did not shy away from horrible things, such as leprosy and demons. He did not shy away from violence, either; he willingly died on the cross, after all. He told some violent stories, such as the parable of the tenants who murdered their landlord's son, and on a few occasions he got angry, as when he overturned money changers' tables. But he refused to do violence to people.

"Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus said. A peacemaker is not someone who never experiences violent ideas and impulses but someone who extends peace in spite of violent ideas and impulses. The goal for the follower of Christ is not to avoid all thoughts of violence but to act peaceably and help others act peaceably.

Despite the power of popular entertainments to move us emotionally, they have little power to change the way we act. Just watching movies like *Gandhi* and the recent documentary *Bully* will not stop a bully from bullying. Only interactions with real people—parents, teachers, friends and victims—are likely to do that. The converse is also true: a peaceful person who watches a lot of violent movies like *The Dark Knight Rises* is not going to become a bully as a result. This should reassure pacifists and parents.

But there remains a deeper danger, which is the power of stories to affect our outlook on the world. Because *The Dark Knight Rises* is a powerful movie, it is also a persuasive movie. In Batman's world, being a peacemaker doesn't look like a good idea. It's not even an option, really. Because of that, *The Dark Knight Rises* suggests that being a peacemaker is not such a great option in our world, either. The movie does not just depict violence; it subtly advocates it. That could be a reason to avoid the movie, but it doesn't have to be.

We need to keep in mind that we have control over how we respond to thoughts and images of violence. We are not passive victims or vessels of depictions of violence; we use them. They do not make us act in any particular way; we choose how we will act. Furthermore, movies and novels and video games are forms of make-believe. The reason we are free to enjoy violence in stories is precisely because we know that the violence is not real. This does not guarantee that it is good or even harmless, but it is in any case not actual violence. If we truly aspire to be peacemakers and if we teach our children to be peacemakers, no amount of violent entertainment is going to turn them or us into bullies or warmongers. We can rest assured of that.

We also need to cultivate empathy. Stories have the power to do this—even violent fantasies like *The Dark Knight Rises*. They allow us to see beyond the horizons of our own emotional experience. It does us no harm to imagine what it feels like to be in a fight. It probably does us some good to imagine that even monsters have feelings. Imagining the experiences of others, even violent experiences and imaginary others, gives us tools to help us to connect better with real people. Moreover, popular entertainments provide social experiences. People often go to movies and play video games to be with other people and have something to talk about with other people. In this way, too, popular entertainments, even violent ones, help connect people.

Finally, we need to remember that our character is revealed in our actions. Peacemakers make peace. This does not require shunning violent entertainments, but it does require making active choices about how to engage with and respond to the violent images, ideas and impulses that surround us. This extends beyond movies and video games to football, news, crime and fantasy novels, even to Bible stories. Often we go with the flow of our culture. If we wish to foster an alternative culture—a culture of peace as opposed to a culture of violence—we need to look for alternative ways to engage with and respond to entertaining violence. This requires doing more than merely shunning it. It requires thinking about it, talking about it and making deliberate choices about when to take part in it, how and with whom.

The way to change a culture of violence is not to avoid it but to work actively to create an alternative culture of peace—in our homes, our communities and the world. That is what Jesus did, in his time. Violent entertainments like *The Dark Knight Rises* are without question part of a mainstream culture of violence and tend to sustain it. Nevertheless, engaging with such entertainments, even enjoying them, does not necessarily mean embracing or supporting the culture of violence. Violent entertainments can be healthy or harmful, prosocial or antisocial. They can make us more prone to violence or less. The difference lies not in what they depict or how they depict it. The difference lies in what we do with them. And that is not up to the entertainments; it is up to us. If we are actively working to create a culture of peace, we do not need to fear depictions of violence, entertaining or otherwise. A culture of peace has the power to recuperate and even transform dark images and dark ideas. That is one of the profound lessons of the Easter story.

Imagining the experiences of others, even violent experiences and imaginary others, gives us tools to help us to connect better with real people.

Dirk Eitzen is a film scholar and documentary filmmaker. He is the director of the Film & Media Studies program at Franklin & Marshall College, and a member of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, in Lancaster, Pa.

Becoming communities of hope

Iris de León-Hartshorn, Portland, Ore., is director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA.

People from dominant culture groups often ask me, "Why do we need to work on undoing racism and becoming interculturally competent?" I'm excited to hear this question. When we ask questions that make us vulnerable, it means we are becoming more honest with each other. Also it shows there are differences between people of color who advocate for change and people from dominant culture groups who struggle to understand why.

What does it mean to be interculturally competent? For many people, it means getting along with and being sensitive to people from other cultures. However, in recent years we've found that that is not enough. Being interculturally competent means we are able to see and understand cultural differences deeply, knowing why they exist and how they help shape one's worldview. It means that as the dominant culture we learn to adapt to differences rather than trying to find ways to assimilate them; we allow our interactions with people outside our cultural understanding to change us. It means we're able to recognize who holds power and privilege in various settings.

Each congregation has a story of its beginnings and of how its members see themselves.

If we are serious about following God within our context, we must be willing to engage with "the other." Our world is rapidly changing, and as a church we need to find ways to adapt to new realities within our communities, which are no longer homogeneous enclaves. And if we are going to be serious about Matthew 28:19-20—the Great Commission—we must be willing to be in relationship with people who are different from us.

To illustrate how complex it can be to understand our diverse context, I often share about how my 5-year-old grandson Gavin asked why he was just half-Mexican. I explained to him that his mother was Mexican and his father was white. He then asked how he could become fully Mexican, and I laughed and tried my best to explain about ancestry and identity. That afternoon, as we pulled into Pollo Loco, a Mexican fast-food restaurant, Gavin asked, "Can I eat here even though I am half-Mexican?" I assured him that anyone could eat at Pollo Loco. Well, he ran inside and up to the counter, announcing at the top of his lungs to the Asian clerk, "I'm half-Mexican, but my nana says I can still eat here." As Gavin struggled to understand himself in a rapidly changing, diverse context, we as the church also struggle to do so.

This fall, Mennonite Church USA will train resource people in area conferences in two initiatives to help congregations work at intercultural transformation: Bienvenido, a program designed by Gilberto Pérez Jr. that empowers first-generation immigrants to navigate and engage U.S. culture; and Communities of Hope, a process that helps congregations become interculturally competent by using a narrative approach to work at undoing the barrier of racism.

The narrative approach of the Communities of Hope process is a way of owning our stories. Each congregation has a story of its beginnings and of how its members see themselves currently. Using the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) to stay centered on Jesus, congregations engaging this process will create their own narrative. They'll be given tools to critique their narrative from the perspective of undoing racism and/or advancing intercultural transformation. Ultimately, they'll construct a new narrative of who they want to become in their present and future context, establishing a covenant that outlines ways they will work at this together.

One of the tools we use in this process is the Intercultural Development Inventory, which helps us see where we are in the process of becoming interculturally competent, taking into consideration issues of power and privilege at both interpersonal and systemic levels. The theory behind the tool is that people must work on skills that develop their capacity to authentically see commonalities and differences, to accept differences and then adapt to them.

Beginning these trainings is a big step for the church. Pray for the Communities of Hope process and the people and congregations who will work with it. We hope every area conference will get involved. May we become Communities of Hope that will weave our stories together in love and grace. TM

Autism and vaccines? Let's think again

Had the authors of "Let's Work for Safe Vaccines" (August) remained with anecdotal reports and personal narratives, this response would not be necessary. But they included ethical imperatives for the church based on medical and scientific claims, so their opinion merits close examination.

The modern concept of autism was introduced by Leo Kanner in 1943. Theories about the cause(s) abound, while searches for cures remain elusive, which is confusing and frustrating for parents. The Hershberger family has experienced this reality in varying degrees for 31 years, living with son Jeff and his autism. The mainstream research consensus holds that an underlying genetic predisposition combined with exposure to some environmental condition(s) precipitate the onset of the condition. Obviously this formulation is broad and vague, with gaps to be explored and filled. The vaccine theory has been one recent effort to fill the gaps.

Controversy over vaccinations and autism intensified in the late 1990s with a publication in the United Kingdom by Andrew Wakefield, MD, who claimed a link between a vaccination for mumps, measles, and rubella and autism. He is a charismatic, authoritative speaker as the Hershbergers attest. But other researchers could never replicate his findings. Further investigation found clear evidence of fraud in his research. Subsequently, the British General Medical Council ruled that Dr. Wakefield acted "dishonorably and irresponsibly." He lost his medical license.

The vaccine controversy moved on to the influence of thimerosal on autism. After years of vigorous public debate, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, the so-called "vaccine court," ruled emphatically in a landmark decision in 2010 that a thimerosal-related cause of autism was scientifically unsupportable, and claimants were not due financial compensation based on the evidence presented. This ruling has not resolved the matter for those who suspect alliances for self-interest among some scientists, pharmaceutical companies and the government. One might infer from "Let's Work for Safe Vaccines" that the recommended vaccine schedule is based significantly on the work of one doctor rather than a group of professionals with diverse areas of expertise called the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Their recommendations are accepted in medical schools and hospitals across the United States.

True, thimerosal does contain a type of mercury, ethyl mercury. However, mercury is also present in the environment in the form of methyl mercury, which has toxic potential. Thimerosal has been removed from childhood vaccines in the United States since 2001, yet the autism rate has climbed. Single-factor hypotheses about the cause of autism remain elusive to date, but based on six large scientific studies, thimerosal is not even one factor among the many.

Part of the issue at hand may relate to the critical difference between causal versus correlation studies and findings. Just because one event happens after another event does not mean one causes the other. A child could develop autism symptoms after a particular vaccination, but that does not necessarily establish cause and effect by scientific standards of analysis. Children are given vaccinations at the age when autism is often diagnosed, but vaccinated children do not have higher rates of autism. Autism Speaks, reportedly the nation's largest independent, nonprofit autism science and advocacy organization, recognizes that despite many studies, no link between vaccines and autism has been found; consequently they urge parents to obtain vaccines for their children.

The call to "work for safe vaccines" is desirable beyond dispute. But if there is an implicit goal or expectation for guaranteed safety before supporting the administration of any vaccine, the call is diversionary. All medicines, medical procedures and interventions have risks. Medical ethics requires providers to explain the risks and side effects in order to obtain informed consent before treatment. The issue is whether or not those risks outweigh the risks of inaction or the probable benefits of intervention.

As Mennonites we should be concerned for all the vulnerable in our midst. However, the vulnerable includes the medically fragile and the immunologically weakened who cannot take vaccinations. Their protection depends on their neighbors receiving vaccinations for the welfare of the entire community. Influenced by the anti-vaccine movement, a minority of parents is putting the lives and health of their own children and others at risk and also making preventable epidemics inevitable. TM

John Hershberger is a licensed psychotherapist and a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

Dan Nafziger is an infectious disease physician and a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church in Goshen.

Judy K. Snyder is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Executive Board looks at fund-raising needs

Mennonite Retirement Trust responds to requests about social screening.

Facing widespread changes in financial giving patterns, the Executive Board (EB) of Mennonite Church USA looked for ways to address increasing financial shortages as it met Sept. 20-22 in Kansas City, Mo.

The board invited input from Beryl Jantzi of Everence and Phil Helmuth, a fund-raiser for Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., about giving trends in the nonprofit sector and what the EB's role in development might be.

In his executive director's report, Ervin Stutzman noted that "since 2003, annual income has dropped from $1.93 million to $1.58 million." The EB staff budget for FYE July 31, 2012, came out in the black, even though overall contributions and revenue continued to decline by more than 3 percent. This was only because of a mixture of reductions of FTE, reduction of pay and benefits, and a transfer of savings from the Pittsburgh 2011 convention.

Over the past decade, support from area conferences has declined, and the results of the first-fruits funding system have been disappointing.

As moderator Dick Thomas said, "We can't just keep cutting our way into the future." Something has to change.

So the EB decided to look at fund-raising.

Jantzi emphasized the importance of having a clear vision. "People don't want to give to organizations that don't know where they're going," he said.

Helmuth said that individuals are the greatest giving source and pointed to the importance of building relationships with donors. You want to create a culture of gratitude and accountability, he said.

EB member Dave Boshart gave an example of cooperation between Central Plains Conference and Mennonite Mission Network in supporting a church in Ecuador. People have given to that project readily.

David Gautsche of Everence brought a report about a new development with Mennonite Retirement Trust. The MRT board met Sept. 14 and agreed to make adjustments to its requirement of social screening for MRT investments.

Gautsche said several institutions have left MRT to start their own retirement plans. A few months ago, he said, a large MRT member institution said it wanted to remain in MRT but also offer unscreened alternatives for employees.

Gautsche said that 60 percent of MRT members are workers in church institutions but not pastors. To remain efficient and keep costs down, MRT needs the involvement of larger institutions, and the MRT board needed to act soon because that institution needed to decide before the end of the year whether or not to pull out.

Mennonite Church USA is the sponsor of MRT but has no legal control. It's a "moral stakeholder," Gautsche said. And while many of these institutions felt connected to the church 20 years ago, today they make decisions that also consider the wishes of their local employees and residents.

The MRT board, said Gautsche, felt that if they don't offer alternatives, they'll see a continued erosion of involvement from institutions, which will increase costs to remaining members. MRT doesn't want to change the values of the Trust, he said, but it wants to offer unscreened options for the plan. It wants to invite people to a set of values but not prescribe those. And the assets belong to the employees, he said, not the institutions.

The plan has about 10,000 members, and Gautsche said he thinks 90-95 percent of the assets will still be invested using MRT's social screening.

EB member Patty Shelly expressed concern about the process. "It's a complicated issue that needs more discussion."

Later in the meetings, EB agreed to receive the MRT report but added that it anticipates "more conversation with Everence concerning this matter within the frame of the Purposeful Plan."

The EB agreed to a recommendation to resume allowing resolutions at the next delegate assembly in Phoenix, Ariz., next July. It suspended resolutions at Pittsburgh 2011. However, resolutions will go to the Constituency Leaders Council to help discern whether or not to bring them to the delegates. Resolutions also need to be submitted earlier so that delegates have time to discuss them.

EB voted unanimously to accept Mennonite Health Services Alliance as an agency of Mennonite Church USA. This followed a vote by the MHS Alliance board. Now the decision goes to MHS Alliance members and, if passed, to the delegate assembly of Mennonite Church USA.

The board also looked at an update of the membership guidelines, with changes made to clean up language about transformation related to the original document.

In addition, the board agreed to changes in the Mennonite Church USA bylaws, which were last revised in 2005. These include the adoption of a new fiscal year, the change of two agencies' names and the addition of another, the adoption of a Purposeful Plan and language about former MC or GC representation on boards, since that was to expire in 2011.

EB's executive committee brought a recommendation to consider changes in churchwide conventions, beginning in 2017, including moving from a five-day to a four-day convention and providing more options for housing (not only hotels but hostels and campgrounds). Such proposed changes are still being discussed. The 2015 convention is scheduled to be held in Kansas City, Mo.—*Gordon Houser*

2012 presidential election sparks three initiatives

Election Day Communion, fasting and prayer, boycott of presidential election

Mennonite pastors Mark Schloneger and Kevin Gasser hope they can get 100 churches in all 50 states to join them in a celebration of Communion on the evening of Nov. 6—Election Day 2012—"to remember what really matters."

"We'll remember that real power in this world—the power to save, to transform, to change—ultimately rests not in political parties or presidents or protests but in the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus," writes Schloneger, pastor of North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, on the website of the Election Day Communion Campaign (electiondaycommunion.org/) he started with Gasser, pastor of Staunton (Va.) Mennonite Church, and Ben Irwin, member of an Episcopal church in Grand Rapids, Mich. The campaign is gaining support not only among Mennonites but also ecumenically (see page 56).

"It is so easy for us to surround ourselves with people who think, look, believe and act just like we do. But that's not what Jesus' dinner party looked like, and that isn't what we are called to do as Jesus' followers," Gasser writes.

The Election Day Communion website lists nine confessions for Communion participants, concluding with, "We'll re-member the body of Christ as the body of Christ, confessing the ways in which partisan politics has separated us from one another and from God." Congregations and individuals can communicate their intentions on the website.

At the denominational level, the executive committee of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board (EB) is inviting the church to engage in prayer and fasting prior to the election as a way of "deepening our allegiance to Jesus" (www.mennoniteusa.org). Citing this election cycle as a season of temptation, they urge Mennonites to follow the example of Jesus, who faced and rejected promises of influence and dominating power.

"There is a danger that our political leanings, in any direction, may shape our understandings of faith and life more deeply than the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus," says Dick Thomas, moderator. "This call envisions that by reflection, prayer, fasting and conversation, we will be shaped by Scripture and made alive by the Spirit in community during this time of a national election."

Jason Boone, coordinating minister of the Peace and Justice Support Network, a partnership of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network, adds that the EB's invitation is "a wonderful chance to draw closer to Jesus and to think about prayer and fasting in creative ways."

"Fasting can be more than skipping a meal; it's an opportunity to lay aside anything that may take our focus from Jesus," he says. "During the election season, fasting could include avoiding political commercials or political back-and-forth on Facebook. Likewise, prayer is a conscious turning toward God and can take many forms. Prayer in the election season may be intentionally spending more time in Scripture."

The Peace and Justice Support Network is responding to the EB's invitation with resources to help the church deepen its commitment to Jesus during this election season, such as a virtual conversation among three different voices about discerning political engagement and Christian allegiance that will take place online.

"The spiritual 'I woke up this mornin' with my mind stayed on Jesus' is a great expression of this groundswell of engagement," says Nancy Heisey of the Executive Board. "I'm glad to be part of a faith community who walks through political turmoil seeking to keep our ultimate commitments clear."

Another grassroots initiative that is generating conversation is a Voter Pledge 2012 drafted by Mennonites in Lancaster, Pa., including Berry Friesen, John Stoner, Harold A. Penner, and Daniel and Marie Riehl. According to their website (www.voterwitness2012.org/), they are inviting people to pledge to vote for neither the Republican nor Democratic presidential nominees in this election as an expression of conscience, noting that—in key policies—they see the two parties as being "consistent with each other and yet so far from the values we hold dear." The organizers say they intend to vote in state and local elections to express their preferences for approaches that affect domestic U.S. policies.—*Annette Brill Bergstresser for Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network*

Call to prayer and fasting

This election cycle, we find ourselves in a season of temptation. Billions of dollars are being spent to capture our vote and our allegiance. We are tempted to place our hope for wholeness and well-being on particular candidates, parties and ideologies.

In this particular time, Scripture speaks pointedly to us: Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save (Psalm 146:3). This is a time to deepen our allegiance to Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who rejects dominating power, links his future to the weak and vulnerable, and loves even enemies.

—*Mennonite Church USA Executive Board*

Reconciliation at Iglesia Menonita Hispana gathering

Time of prayer and blessing relieves tensions around Phoenix location decision.

With temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, Dallas literally gave a warm welcome to those attending the sixth biennial meeting of the Iglesia Menonita Hispana (IMH). The event took place Aug. 2-4 at the Luz del Evangelio congregation.

The entire IMH board of directors, representing all areas in the United States, attended the meetings. However, the attendance of pastors and delegates, both national and local, was poor. This assembly had more fraternal delegates and representatives of the denomination and Mennonite Central Committee than official IMH delegates.

Mennonite Church USA's executive director, Ervin Stutzman, and moderator-elect Elizabeth Soto Albrecht played an active role during these meetings and made a presentation on the Purposeful Plan, which is to be addressed in each congregation in the United States.

Glen Guyton, Mennonite Church USA's associate executive director for finance and convention planning, talked about preparations for Phoenix 2013, noting that next summer's assembly "will be very different from any previous one. ... Our desire is, with all participants, to make an impact on the city. ... There will be times in which everything will have to do with antiracism and immigration issues," Guyton said.

> I trust that God will help us ... strengthen the identity of the Hispanic Mennonite congregations and ... be a prophetic voice in the midst of a changing society and church.—Samuel López

Iris de León-Hartshorn, director for transformational peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, and Saulo Padilla, Mennonite Central Committee's coordinator for immigration education, reported on important issues concerning immigration, such as the Two-Year Plan on Immigration Collaboration, and announced a special plan to help undocumented youth with their request applications for the Deferred Action Plan law announced by President Obama.

Soto Albrecht informed participants that, in solidarity with the Hispanics unable to attend convention, she will not go to the Phoenix convention until the day she is installed as the new moderator. She said she will drive there as a form of pilgrimage, stopping at various places and churches that will hold symbolic acts as she travels.

At the end of the presentation from these leaders, outgoing IMH moderator Juan Montes called all participants to surround the Mennonite Church USA representatives and pray for them, the work they do for the entire denomination and its constituent groups. This suggestion was confirmed by Juanita Nuñez, former moderator of the IMH, who specifically acknowledged the work of Soto Albrecht and congratulated her on her courageous decision not to attend the Phoenix convention until her installation.

The prayers triggered a highly emotional moment. The result was a beautiful work of reconciliation—a historic moment for IMH leaders in their relationship with denominational staff after the Executive Board declined to change the location of next summer's Phoenix convention. (In 2010, then executive director Yvonne Diaz formally requested reconsideration of the location.)

These were wonderful moments appreciated by all attendees. Paula Killough, representing Mennonite Mission Network, said [this] "contributes to the unity of the church. ... I experienced a miracle of God."

Worship services both evenings were well attended by the local church people who also took advantage of workshops presented by Gilberto Flores, Samuel López and Juan Montes on issues of intergenerational challenges, ecclesiastical government and the challenges of the immigrant church, respectively.

Young people, almost entirely from the local church, participated both days in a special program called "Youth, Technology and its Message" presented by David Maldonado, Milton Donato and Cristian Aleman from Fort Myers, Fla.

Incoming IMH moderator Samuel López said, "I think the meeting was very positive and enthusiastic. ... The worship services were also significant and full of blessing. I trust that God will help us in future challenges, which will have to do with how to strengthen the identity of the Hispanic Mennonite congregations and how to be a prophetic voice in the midst of a changing society and church, especially in what has to do with the different understandings and practices of human sexuality. The immigration issue will continue as a matter of challenge for our church."

López added, "As signs of hope, we perceive the leadership of Elisabeth Soto [Albrecht] as the new moderator of the Mennonite Church USA for the 2013-2015 period, and brother David Maldonado, the new moderator-elect of the IMH. Also the congregational development program of the IMH is a sign of hope. Finally, my call is that as a church of Christ we unite our efforts in a vision of healing and hope for all, and holding hands we run together, to reach the goal that God has placed in front of us."—*Adapted from an article by Rafael Barahona in* Meno Acontecer, *the free, Spanish-language ezine distributed monthly by* The Mennonite

Ervin Stutzman visits Mennonites in Indonesia

Trip may open the way for more Indonesian-speaking congregations in U.S.

Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, and his wife, Bonnie, spent two weeks in Indonesia in September with Sunoko Lin, pastor of Maranatha Christian Fellowship, an Indonesian Mennonite congregation in Northridge, Calif. The first half of the trip consisted of ministry visits and the second half of vacation together. Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA posed these questions:

What was the purpose of the trip and your hopes for the trip? I responded to an invitation from Jemaat Kristen Indonesia, (JKI) one of the three Indonesian synods that are part of Mennonite World Conference. They have a number of congregations in the United States, two of which are also affiliated with Mennonite Church USA. They would like to plant more churches in the United States. The main goal of the trip was for me to learn about their church and to discuss ways for us to partner in ministry.

Which areas did you visit, and what kinds of activities did you do? We visited several cities or rural areas on the island of Java. I preached and taught in a number of venues, including congregational worship services, pastoral gatherings and a seminary training event. I also met on-site with the leaders of two large Mennonite congregations to learn about their ministry. In the two pastors' events, we had people from the other two Mennonite synods as well as other denominations.

Photo provided

Sunoko Lin and Ervin Stutzman worshipping at a training event at the Sangkakala Theological Seminary in Central Java. The dean of the seminary is standing to Ervin's left, Lin to his right.

Could you share some highlights from the trip? Perhaps the most memorable highlight was the two days I taught at the seminary, which we would call a Bible school. I have never spoken to a more enthusiastic and receptive audience. This group of 150 young people worshiped enthusiastically, prayed fervently and drank in the teaching I gave on leadership.

I was also deeply impressed by the congregation called Injil Kerajaan, the Gospel of the Kingdom Church, in Semarang. This congregation has 20,000 active members and worships in a stadium they constructed. They are part of the JKI synod. Their ministries of compassion and evangelism have blessed their Muslim community to the extent that they now enjoy the deep favor of government officials. They operate a school with 4,000 students from K through 12—mostly Muslim students. They help Muslims market their farm products. Their healing services have touched the lives of multiple thousands of Muslims as well as Christians. They have baptized thousands of Muslims, many of whom have become vital witnesses for Jesus. The church is currently building a university, a hospital and an orphanage. They sponsor many other ministries as well. I feel like Mennonite Church USA has much to learn from these brothers and sisters. I hope we can partner with JKI in planting Indonesian-speaking congregations in the United States.

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Good news by the seaside

Anabaptist peace theology seeps into other African denominations.

On a sweltering afternoon in Accra, Ghana, 50 people file into the seaside Church of Melchizedek to learn about the Old Testament from a seminary professor. But these aren't seminary students training to be pastors. These are lay members of African Initiated Churches who are so enthusiastic about their faith that they will sit for hours to hear about Jesus, some while nursing and entertaining infants.

The students are the first in a new certificate program offered by Good News Theological College and Seminary, a Ghanaian theological school and Mennonite Mission Network partner since its founding in 1971. The new initiative brings theological education efforts in Ghana full circle—from the pew to the campus and now back to the pew.

In the late 1960s, Mennonite mission workers, including Ed and Irene Weaver and Erma Grove, approached African Initiated Churches (churches from African denominations that were not planted by foreign missionaries) to ask if they could do Bible studies with their parishioners. The Bible studies were popular, but church leaders eventually said they wanted a seminary where future pastors could take up residence for full-time study.

Good News Theological College and Seminary was born and has trained African Initiated Church pastors ever since. But recently, the call from congregations has been to provide theological training for lay members who don't have the means to uproot their lives and move to Oyibi, about 33 kilometers from Accra, the capital city.

The result is the current certificate program that Humphrey Akogyeram, a Good News professor and graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., says is strengthening the African Initiated Churches.

"This shows that the African Initiated Churches are now becoming more open to theological education to improve their ministries, and they are also making effort to get more of their constituency trained for effective discipleship and ministry," he says.

African Initiated Churches have historically been held in low esteem by leaders from mainline denominations. Part of the reason for this, according to Steve Wiebe-Johnson, Mission Network director for Africa, is that the leaders of African Initiated Churches themselves don't always know their own denomination's history. Good News seeks to remedy the gap in knowledge by requiring pastors in training to research and write their own history to better understand how they fit into the larger Christian story.

"One of the key things that Good News has contributed for many, many churches is finding their identity within the broader Christian conversation," Wiebe-Johnson says. "Instead of seeing themselves as marginalized groups, they've found their place within the Christian witness in the Ghanaian context."

James Nadin

From left: Mary Mensah from Divine Redeemers Ministry, Michael Djanie Kotey (eyes closed) from Ebenezer Universal Church, Emmanuel Kodjoe Andam (hands raised) from Jesus of Nazareth Faith Ministry and Doris Ayeley Adjei from the Living Church of God worship together during a Good News Theological College and Seminary class at the Church of Melchizedek in Accra, Ghana.

With the certificate program, Good News continues strengthening the identity and theology of African Initiated Churches through the training of lay leaders, while also continuing to train professional pastors—an important balance, says Wiebe-Johnson.

"In a sense, Good News has a very holistic approach to theological education," he says. "They don't simply concentrate on training pastors; they don't simply concentrate on lay people; they don't simply concentrate teaching a particular doctrine."

While there is a national Mennonite conference in Ghana, Good News and Mennonite mission workers have focused on walking alongside African Initiated Churches. Akogyeram says this has paved the way for Anabaptist peace theology to seep into the training that pastors of many denominations receive.

"We expect the new knowledge and understanding of the gospel to transform their churches so that they become agents of peace in the midst of social unrest, injustices and broken relationships" he says.—*Andrew Clouse for Mennonite Mission Network*

Toilets project resolves Nepali dispute

Mission Network partner builds toilets that serve 75 households.

Toilets for Peace has led to improved relations between lower-caste Dalits and non-Dalits in Udayapur, Nepal, by providing a better means for Dalits to relieve themselves. This has also led to improved health conditions in this rural community.

In many rural areas of developing countries—and even in some remote parts of industrialized nations like the United States—modern toilets that flush to underground plumbing are uncommon.

In these places, many people use outhouses or pit latrines, a deep hole lined with stones, with a ceramic or plastic squatting pan, and a simple superstructure made of locally-available materials. Water for flushing and cleaning is provided in a bucket.

Dalits are comprised of more than 20 caste groups relegated to the lower rungs of Nepali society. They are poor, unable to own property and land, limited to menial jobs and unable to worship inside temples or some churches because some consider them "unclean."

In Udayapur, Kamala Devi Damai and her large family are among the Dalits living in rows of small, mud-built houses. Her children and others had been relieving themselves along roadsides or in fields owned by non-Dalits. This angered their high-caste neighbors, many of whom have latrines.

But the Damai family and other Dalits saw no alternative, given their lack of land and financial resources. This situation even caused tensions among Dalits as they all endured the foul odors and stepping in waste.

In 2009, the Dalit Sahayog Samaj (Dalit Help Society), with financial and technical support from the United Mission to Nepal, built 30 toilets, or outhouses, on a strip of public land adjoining the fields in the community. About 75 households and 210 individuals have benefited, according to UMN, which is a Mennonite Mission Network partner.

Care Nepal, a separate organization, had previously provided about 10 toilets, says Bimala Shrestha, who at the time was the program officer for Peace Building with United Mission to Nepal and helped to launch the program.

"Their broken relationship was restored," Shrestha says. "In our small supports, we could see big changes in their communities."

The community is cleaner and healthier, relationships are more cordial, and women in particular are happy that the toilets provide more privacy and safety. A committee monitors and manages the toilets.

Witnessing the benefits, non-Dalits have begun building toilets on their lands for their families.

"I have been impressed with the practicality of this solution to a multilayered problem," says John F. Lapp, a UMN board member who is also Asia director for Mennonite Mission Network. "Toilets for Peace provides a very real conflict-inhibiting mechanism in the society, as well as an important improvement to the community's sanitation and health situation," he says.—*Wil LaVeist for Mennonite Mission Network*

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ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR DOUG KLASSEN (October 17-26)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)
MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS
JAMAICA - Its PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 11-20)
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
HOLY LAND TOUR with TRACY SPROAT (March 13-21)
MEDA in MOROCCO (April 2-12)
ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR PHIL WAGLER (April 16-25)
MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN and CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28-May 7)
EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 2-15)
GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 24-June 6)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (June 6-19)
ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (July 23-August 3)
RUSSIA and UKRAINE: The MENNONITE STORY (September 4-16)
THE BRITISH ISLES (England, Scotland and Wales) with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (October 17-28)
CHINA and a YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE (November 1-15)
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Giving as a spiritual discipline

Donors find creative ways to make contributions of money and time.

Can writing a check serve as a spiritual discipline? Elaine Kauffman mails a $10 check every month to support MennoMedia's *Shaping Families* radio show.

"I know that agencies and institutions need regular income," she says. "It's kind of a discipline. Every month I sit down and write my gift checks."

She tries to write these tithe checks immediately upon receiving her paycheck.

"It's fun to try to make the tithe the first thing that comes off the top," she says.

Kauffman is pastor at First Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake, Minn. She remembers listening to *The Mennonite Hour* records as a child. Her church, First Mennonite, has been sponsoring *Shaping Families* on the local radio station since November 2010. In 2011, Bethel Mennonite joined them. She receives positive feedback from listeners and wants to support the show on her own as well.

Similarly, Rebecca Staker of First Mennonite Church in Morton, Ill., has mailed a $20 check to the Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education fund of Mennonite Education Agency each month for many years. Staker, a widow since 1951, will be 91 years old in October.

> I really like the simplicity of giving to so many different Mennonite organizations through one site.—Julie Swartzentruber

"Even though it's a small amount, I can help some," she says. "I give because I care."

She hopes others will know that every little bit helps and that God can "multiply what you give."

For the older women at Bethesda Mennonite Church in Henderson, Neb., giving is "engrained," says Kathy Friesen. Henderson has been a Miriam Circle Church for six years, meaning they give over $1,000 in donations to Mennonite Women USA and *Timbrel* subscriptions. Friesen remembers serving as a greeter at a banquet to celebrate women. The planners decided against a formal offering, but the women still brought money and handed it to her.

"Even if there wasn't an official offering, people will still bring money," she says. "If you asked them, they would say, 'This is how I can contribute. I can't work but I can give.'"

The women's group at Bethesda gives to 10 other organizations in addition to Mennonite Women USA.

Phyllis Lehman of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church has also given regularly to Mennonite Women USA for the past eight years. She started giving from an inheritance after her mother died in 2005. Her mother was involved in Mennonite Women USA and a woman's group, so the regular giving offers a way to honor her.

Not everyone mails a check each month. Julie Swartzentruber of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church learned about the online giving site (http://giving.mennoniteusa.org/) at the convention at Charlotte 2005.

"I really like the simplicity of giving to so many different Mennonite organizations through one site and the ease of designating subgroups within the larger institutions," says Swartzentruber.

For congregations to join the system, there is a one-time start up fee of $50. If that cost is prohibitive, they should tell Executive Board staff members, who have waived the fee in the past. "We want every Mennonite Church USA organization to be able to participate," says Lehman.

For individuals who live outside "Mennonite hubs," electronic transfers also offer an easy way for them to give to Mennonite organizations and feel connected.

Earl and Donna Burkholder moved to Las Cruces, N.M., in 1998. He subsequently set up electronic transfer giving with the Mennonite Mission Network in 1999. They moved for Earl's teaching position at New Mexico State University. He retired in July 2010, but his wife still works in the university library. While the Burkholders give to their local United Methodist church (there are no Mennonite Church USA congregations in the area), they also give to Mennonite Mission Network, *The Mennonite*, Mennonite Education Agency and other deserving charities.

"Over the years, we have not given enormously, but continuing to support [Mennonite Church USA] and its agencies is important," he says.

Others give time as gifts. Margaret Ryan started giving and volunteering to Friendship Community, Lititz, Pa., when her son, Patrick, moved into a Friendship home. Friendship is a ministry supporting adults with development disabilities and a member organization of MHS Alliance. Since Patrick works at Homefield, an all-volunteer group farm home for adults with special needs—Ryan and her husband regularly purchase a half-share of produce for Patrick's home.

"I thought it would be a good idea to share with the house what he helps to grow and harvest," she says.

She also collects items for the auction and volunteers at the heART gallery weekly. Ryan says she supports Friendship because she wants to "give back." She expressed her thanks the last two years through her speech at the Christmas brunch in which she described her appreciation for the employees' hard work.—*Anna Groff*

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'Friendship' group changes behavior

Laos program expects 100 college students, 18 teachers and 855 students by 2014.

MCC photo/Silas Crews

Playing games like this one is part of what attracts students to a Mennonite Central Committee Laos peacebuilding club that is based on friendships.

Souphatta Chantavong used to say whatever came to her mind when she was angry, not thinking how her words might hurt her friends.

"Now I can make myself understood if I speak in a way that develops relationships," says Chantavong, age 21. "I think more about what I'm going to say, and I know what I shouldn't say to others and what I should."

Chantavong, a social work and development major, is just one of the people who have grown in their understanding of relationships through training from Mittapab, a Mennonite Central Committee-supported peacebuilding organization in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). Mittapab is an MCC Global Family education sponsorship program.

Started in 2006, Mittapab is the only group in Lao PDR directly teaching the idea of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Mittapab means friendship in Lao, a concept that is easier for Lao people to relate to than peace, which they commonly define as absence of war.

Building on the universal interest in friendship, MCC workers in Lao PDR teach peacebuilding and conflict transformation skills to university students, who in turn train high school students on the weekends.

In 2010, Mittapab also started training teachers from two schools so they could reinforce the conflict transformation skills in the classroom and help lead Mittapab activities at their schools.

"We have the opportunity to equip youth with the passion and skills to both prevent and transform conflicts in their everyday lives," says Crystal Zook, MCC worker in Lao PDR from Willow Street, Pa. "As youth are the future of nations, Mittapab seeks to help facilitate this teaching of interpersonal conflict skills in Lao schools."

The youth who came to Xaysetha Secondary School on a morning in February were learning about body language and other ways of communicating. Mittapab trainers use games, songs and skits to entertain and make students think.

Topics covered during the six monthly classes include friendship, when relationships have problems, empathy, listening, speaking assertively, conflict transformation problem solving and being a peacebuilder. The classes emphasize respect for people of different religions and incorporate conflict transformation skills that reflect the values and practices of Lao culture.

Lao proverbs, such as "Fast words will say wrong things," give students chances to reflect on what common sayings teach about friendship and conflict transformation.

By 2014, Mittapab expects to have about 100 college students and 18 teachers participate in trainings to work with 855 students from four schools.—*Linda Espenshade for MCC*

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Young Cheyenne leaders teach their heritage

Two of 33 participants in Summer Service program serve in cultural center.

In preparation for Summer Service, Micah Hart, Cordell, Okla., participated in Global Anabaptist Peacemakers training offered by West Coast Mennonite Central Committee along with most other Summer Service participants from MCC Central States and West Coast MCC. In this Care for Creation class, Hart explains a concept as Armando Lara of Sanger, Calif., right, listens in the background.

Micah Hart and Cristina Yellowman spent much of the past summer interpreting their Cheyenne culture and heritage to visitors at the Cheyenne Cultural Center in Clinton, Okla. Located along famed U.S. Route 66, the center is a planned destination for some tourists and a spur of the moment decision for others.

Hart, whose work, like Yellowman's, was sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) U.S. Summer Service program and the Oklahoma Fellowship of Indian Mennonite Churches of Clinton, says many visitors were surprised at what they learned at the center.

"Most have this view of Native Americans from TV, the stereotyping, and they come here and [the center] opens their eyes," he says. The people he encountered seemed pleased to learn something they had not known before, he says. The information varied from traditional forms of Cheyenne justice to games the Cheyenne and other tribes played, such as an early version of lacrosse or field hockey.

For 10 weeks, Hart, of Cordell, Okla., and Yellowman, of El Reno, Okla., worked closely with their supervisor, Betty Hart, assistant director of the center, Yellowman's grandmother and Hart's great aunt. Together they set up an exhibit about Cheyenne culture and history and educated the public.

The MCC U.S. Summer Service program is a six- to 10-week leadership development initiative, designed for young adults who are from diverse ethnic backgrounds and are active participants in MCC's supporting churches.

Assignments take place in the worker's home church or community. Participants are supported financially by MCC U.S. and local congregations. This summer, 18 men and 15 women, ages 18-30, took part nationally.

According to program coordinator Kim Dyer, the experience enables young adults to serve, learn and make a difference in the church community. The program's purpose is to "increase leadership skills and capabilities, growing and preparing young adults for potential church leadership roles in the present and future church."

Micah Hart and Yellowman's congregation, Koinonia Mennonite Church, sees the cultural center as an extension of its ministry. The church has supported the cultural center since its planning stages and 1977 opening by Lawrence and Betty Hart and their family. Lawrence Hart is a former MCC and MCC U.S. board member. Summer Service workers have worked there since the late 1970s.

This summer, Micah Hart's and Yellowman's assignments also included interviewing three Cheyenne chiefs to document peacemaking methods used in community conflict. They updated records of people who have attended existing or closed Mennonite churches in Clinton through the years and performed other administrative tasks.

"Summer Service helped me be more of a person who can get the word out about our tribe, educating people about our background, where we came from," says Micah Hart, reflecting on how he has grown. "It helped me see other people's worldview, their point of view."

He is attending Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford this fall.

> Summer Service helped me be more of a person who can get the word out about our tribe, … our background.—Micah Hart

Yellowman, a senior at El Reno High School, says the best part of her experience was helping to create and put up an exhibit. "Another favorite part of my summer was being able to tell the history of my Cheyenne people," she says.

Betty Hart says the Summer Service program also teaches skills that will help participants get their first jobs, including filling out an application, obtaining references and being responsible for their attendance.—*Ed Nyce for Mennonite Central Committee*

MennoMedia releases first audio books

Two books about his parents are read by Ervin Stutzman.

Just over a year after forming as a new agency, MennoMedia released its first audiobook and the first audiobook with a Mennonite Publishing House connection for 23 years.

As of July 10, *Tobias of the Amish* and *Emma: A Widow Among the Amish* are available on CD and audio download, read by the author and Mennonite Church USA executive director, Ervin R. Stutzman. The audiobooks have been released under the Herald Press book publishing imprint of MennoMedia.

"Audiobooks are often popular with commuters, visually impaired, joggers, multitaskers and anyone who enjoys listening more than reading," says Sheri Hartzler, project manager for the audiobooks and director of electronic media at MennoMedia.

Stutzman, of Harrisonburg, Va., began making audio recordings of the published books on his own time, going to the offices of (then) Third Way Media and sitting in a quiet room arranged by engineer Wayne Gehman. Eventually the recording moved to the studio rooms that are part of the MennoMedia complex, space that is mostly rented to Robby Meadows Studio Productions.

"It was really a labor of love," says Stutzman, not knowing at that point whether anyone would produce and distribute the recordings. "Reading my family stories aloud brought back many memories in a more powerful way than when first I wrote them. I hope that these audiobooks will prompt many good family memories to those who listen as well."

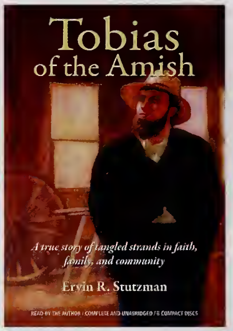
Stutzman is also featured on the July 21 episode of the *Shaping Families* radio program (www.ShapingFamilies.com) talking about writing these fictional books based on true life.

"To write a good family narrative, you need to draw on the memories of many different family members to get a fuller picture," Stutzman says. "You talk about things that you haven't talked about for a very long time. That drew our family closer together."

***Emma* is already MennoMedia's top seller** in the Kindle ebook platform, and MennoMedia is working on getting ebooks available in a format other than Kindle.

"We hope to create future audiobooks with titles that show a good chance of recouping the investment," said Russ Eanes, executive director of MennoMedia.

The audiobooks for *Emma* and *Tobias* each come on eight CDs. *Tobias* runs nine hours and 28 minutes, while *Emma* runs 10 hours and seven minutes. The readings are complete and unabridged. Each set of eight CDs sells for $28.99. The audio downloads are $19.99 each from the MennoMedia webstore.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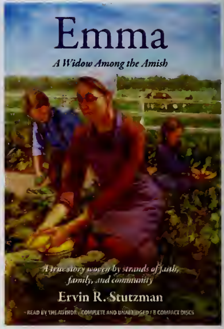
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MennoMedia formed July 1, 2011, out of the former Mennonite Publishing Network and Third Way Media, with the idea of bringing together electronic media technologies with traditional print media. The last audiobook published by Herald Press was Alan Kreider's *Journey Toward Holiness* in 1989.—*Melodie Davis for MennoMedia*

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Fight over water in northern Mexico

Opponents to Mennonite farmers destroy dams and shut down wells.

When Mennonite farmers first arrived in Chihuahua in the 1920s, they faced the daunting challenge of growing crops in the dry, dusty soil of the high desert plains, where the average rainfall barely exceeded 13 inches per year. The fact that Mennonites today are among the wealthiest inhabitants of the region is attributable not just to hard work and frugal living, but also to the bountiful water table they discovered beneath the barren earth.

Access to water has turned the Mennonite colonies of Chihuahua into the breadbasket of northern Mexico. Virtually all the enormous quantities of corn, cotton, beans, hay and apples Mennonites now produce is dependent on deep wells, artificial reservoirs and complex systems of irrigation.

But that economic transformation has come at an ecological and social cost.

During the past year, a loosely organized populist movement—the so-called "Barzonistas"—has accused Mennonite farmers of drilling wells and creating dams without the proper permits. Through a series of public demonstrations on Mennonite farmland, the group is trying to rally public opinion to their cause.

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Tensions came to a head in mid-July, when a large number of Barzonistas—with the apparent support of CONAGUA, the government agency that oversees water usage—destroyed a dam belonging to a Mennonite farmer and shut down a series of wells. Those aggressive actions escalated in the weeks that followed as CONAGUA officials, supported by large crowds of Barzonistas, destroyed several more dams and closed additional wells, claiming that Mennonites had drilled them illegally.

> The public debate over water usage has … revealed deeper fault lines, both within the Mennonite community and between Mennonite colonies and the broader Mexican society.

The Mennonites, in turn, have insisted that they paid significant amounts of money (from $20,000 to $40,000) for permission to drill the wells but that CONAGUA representatives simply pocketed the money and failed to properly register the permits.

In August and early September, confrontations between Barzonista protesters and Mennonite farmers became increasingly tense. The Barzonistas defend their actions by citing the drought, a declining water table and Mennonite immunity from the laws. The farmers, in turn, faced with the loss of their land and livelihood if their crops are not adequately watered at the crucial point in the growing season, have denounced the actions as unjustified and illegal.

The public debate over water usage has also revealed deeper fault lines, both within the Mennonite community and between Mennonite colonies and the broader Mexican society. The aggressive actions of the Barzonistas have prompted, for example, a lively internal discussion among the Mennonites regarding their commitment to nonviolence. But it has also raised more profound questions about the persistent ethnic, linguistic and ecclesial divides that have separated the Mennonite colonies from their Spanish-speaking neighbors for nearly a century.

The immediate crisis in Mexico is a legal debate over permits, corruption charges and access to limited resources. But the deeper question is whether the waters in the Chihuahuan desert will be sufficiently plentiful to baptize those who remain outside the family of faith, so that they too can be included as full participants in the shalom of the gospel. *—John D. Roth for the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism*

Harold S. Bender and the Anabaptist vision

Leonard Gross commemorates Bender's life and passing 50 years ago.

Through the centuries, certain statements created in times of confusion and conflict have caught the imagination of our people and as such became for a time an impelling vision of hope that helped pull the movement through onto more solid ground. Such statements came at crucial times in our Anabaptist-Mennonite history: at Zurich in 1524-25, at the time of the birth of Anabaptism; at Schleitheim in 1527, when the movement seemed to be going off into all directions; but also in 1575, 1702, 1841, 1896 and, last but not least, in 1944, with the creation of Harold S. Bender's *Anabaptist Vision*.

Each of these statements dealt with the Anabaptist vision—of disciples of Christ gathered in his Spirit who sought to live out his gospel of peace. In 1702, for example, part of the vision ran:

> *The characteristics of the true church are: the true fruits of conversion; the avoidance of sins; living in goodness, righteousness and truth according to the teaching of Christ and his apostles; having the right faith in Jesus Christ through obedience to the divine word; practicing his holy ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; confessing God and Jesus Christ candidly before the people; holding to a fiery brotherly love among one another; and maintaining the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace and through taking up the cross and the true discipleship of Christ.*

A triad of ideas—discipleship, the community dynamic of mutuality and love, and the overriding spirit of peace—are central motifs in this 1702 Anabaptist vision. In a manner that is more than coincidental, these same themes surfaced again in 1944.

Harold S. Bender's *Anabaptist Vision* was also a vision of faithful disciples of Jesus, gathered in the name and spirit of the Christ of peace. It cut through myriad doctrinal overlays that had accrued over the decades—especially after the transformation of the Mennonite church from a German culture to an American culture a half-century earlier.

It was, at its base, conservative in its attempt to conserve the best of our faith-tradition; it was liberal in being open to testing any and all new scholarship that impinged upon the quest toward an honest portrayal of our Anabaptist-Mennonite past. And it was this vision that permeated Bender's life and thought throughout his lifetime. In fact, it had to be honestly conservative as well as liberal in order to jump back through the dominating progressive era of the 1910s and 1920s, when the Mennonite Church (MC) had leaned so heavily upon the new religious trends of the day. This included a form of Fundamentalism that, with its emphasis upon individualism and nationalism, endangered our traditional witness of peace, community and discipleship.

Although seemingly so "biblical," such doctrines, when seen in the light of their social context, stood in opposition to certain traits that had been part and parcel of Anabaptist history all the way back to Anabaptist beginnings in 1525. Yet this danger remained largely unrecognized by many Mennonites during the first four decades of the 20th century.

Who was Harold S. Bender? In the year 2012, there are a generation or two who no longer know about Bender. Who was this man, and why do we, in 2012, choose to commemorate him and his views? The following is a brief summary of his story:

Harold S. Bender was born in Elkhart, Ind., in 1897, at a time when Elkhart was at the hub of the Mennonite Church (MC), thanks to John F. Funk's *Herald of Truth / Herold der Wahrheit* and the other programs in publishing, relief work, mission work, mutual aid and education that developed there in the 1880s and 1890s.

In 1923, Harold married Elizabeth Horsch, and the family was blessed with two children, Mary Eleanor and Nancy. Elizabeth would prove to be a powerful ally to Harold, given her uncanny ability of honing the English language and her keen adeptness in the use of foreign languages.

From 1924 to 1962, Bender was professor at Goshen (Ind.) College in church history, Bible and sociology. He was dean of Goshen from 1931 to 1944 and dean of Goshen College Biblical Seminary from 1944 until his death.

Bender's birth coincided with the Mennonite renaissance, or awakening, of the 1880s and 1890s, which was, in part, the result of a shift in language from German to English. Mennonites during this era began accepting much within their new English-speaking, North American culture, including higher education and a renewed interest in missions at home and abroad. Bender's own interest in education should be seen in this light.

Bender's formative years, on the other hand, came during the time of a new generation of MC leaders who attempted to establish a new Mennonite orthodoxy in doctrine and dress, with a certain codification of both and imbued to some degree with Fundamentalism. Daniel Kauffman was the major leader at the time (ca. 1898-1930). His books *Manual of Bible Doctrine* (1898), *Bible Doctrine* (1914) and *Doctrines of the Bible* (1928) became the definitive word for many within the church during those decades.

The importance of Bender's work: The significance of Bender may be seen in part in terms of how he dealt with these new trends, both fundamentalist and liberal, within the church. Bender chose a route and approach to vision that differed from both. His vision stood in contrast to the Kauffman view of doctrine and dress, not so much in criticizing it directly but by circumventing it.

Bender chose to express the Christian faith through the historical process and attempted to rediscover the Anabaptist vision of biblical faith and life. He did not believe he was creating a new theology but was returning to and recovering an old faith: that of his own spiritual ancestors.

In 1927, he created a journal, the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (*MQR*), and in 1929 he founded a scholarly series, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, writing the first volume himself (*Two Centuries of American Mennonite Literature*). A dissertation on Conrad Grebel, one of the founders of Anabaptism (1935, published 1950), a biography of Menno Simons (1936), *Mennonite Origins in Europe* (1942), *The Anabaptist Vision* (1944) (lead editor of) the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (four volumes, 1955-59), *Biblical Revelation and Inspiration* (1959) and *These Are My People* (1962)—these publications indicate the scope of Bender's efforts to bring about a return to the Anabaptist faith as he understood it.

THE MENNONITE ENCYCLOPEDIA

From left to right: Cornelius Krahn, Bender, Melvin Gingerich were the editors of the four-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia* published 1955-59.

Throughout these decades, he edited *MQR* and published many shorter essays there and in other scholarly journals and church papers.

Bender's leadership in MC life, worldwide Mennonitism and in ecumenical contacts was evident, in part, through the long list of committees and organizations in which he was active. Central in Bender's vision, on all levels of interaction, was his concern for the way of peace and love as being integral to the path Christians should take.

Critique of the Anabaptist Vision: During a score of years, up to the time of the stormy era of the Vietnam generation, beginning around 1964, there was a positive resonance with Bender's Anabaptist Vision on the part of a growing number of Mennonites and "outside" Reformation scholars alike. The Festschrift *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, edited by Guy F. Hershberger and published in 1957, is a powerful testimonial to this development. The Anabaptist Vision had become the byword throughout the Mennonite Church. The essay is still in continuing reprints, under its own title, "The Anabaptist Vision."

History has its own ways, however, of bringing about change. And the Vietnam era, which has come and gone, left its profound effect on North American culture and beyond. The Mennonite world had come to an end as it had been known. A barrier was erected, thanks to the Vietnam era, so high that it is all but impossible for Mennonites today to understand the ethos and faith of even our recent forebears—as recently as the 1950s.

Beginning in 1968, for example, the devotional covering for baptized women was no longer mandatory in the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. The tremendous import of the changing reality behind this change in symbol is hard to imagine, hard to overestimate and of the utmost significance. And this symbol and reality, combined with the conscious shift in church polity —in 1971 the governing MC body, called Mennonite General Conference, died, and the new General Assembly was born—signaled tremendous change within the largest branch of Mennonitism—change that happened within other Mennonite groups as well.

But the trends and events of the times—inner-city uprisings, peace marches, the 1968 Democratic Convention, student unrest, Woodstock, secularism, assassinations, riots, Kent State, revolution—had also changed the very substance, spirit and structures of our 20th-century Mennonite tradition. From being "neither in nor of" the world, as apparently had been the case for half a century, thanks to the Vietnam War we seemed to be transformed into being both in and of the world by the 1980s. This is, at least, what some Mennonite observers and prophets were saying and predicting at the time. But had we really sold out to the world? Or had we just entered instead into a new phase of being in but not of the world around us?

The Anabaptist Vision from the perspective of 2012: In the year 2012, do we still hold to a vision that balances on the one hand the individual response (Christian discipleship) and on the other hand the corporate dimension of being the gathered, peaceful people of God?

By the 1980s, some uttered second thoughts about the substance, spirit and structures of the Anabaptist Vision. Some people apparently are rejecting the Anabaptist Vision; some are critical of parts of it; some remain affirmative. It was a missive for its time, and therein lie its strengths but also its limitations.

Those who think Bender's Anabaptist Vision of 1944 went too far down the road of simplification would probably criticize Bender even more for stating in 1950 that it is discipleship and discipleship alone that provides the clues for finding "the central controlling idea of Anabaptist theology."

On the other hand, in these days when spirituality is a major byword, those who ask about the spiritual dimension of Bender's vision must of necessity read the whole of the Anabaptist Vision as well as Bender's later, further interpretations of things Anabaptist in order to do him and his ideas justice. This includes his 1950 essay "The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship," in which Bender documents his thesis historically, and his 1961 essay "Walking in the Resurrection," a description of a discipleship made possible only through the presence of the Spirit within and without—among those individuals gathered in Christ's name.

The continuing usefulness of the Anabaptist Vision: There is, however, a clue to the continuing usefulness of the Anabaptist Vision even now, after the coming of an "end of the Mennonite world" in the 1960s.

The first joint gathering of the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) and the Mennonite Church (MC), took place in Bethlehem, Pa., in 1983. The theme chosen for this event revolved around the triad of ideas that makes up the Anabaptist Vision. Both GCs and MCs entered this spirit and substance naturally and enthusiastically. It seemed to be a natural foundation, one that fit all the way around. No one seemed to see this as unusual or old-fashioned or liberal or conservative. In retrospect, it seems to have filled the bill of needs. Here is a clue to a deepening of the ongoing cooperative efforts of the two largest North American Mennonite groups that would later merge in 2002.

Whether anything else might be found some day that might serve better our ongoing purposes as a gathered people is still open to speculation. In closing this essay however, it should be noted that Harold S. Bender was not reinventing the wheel when he brought together his vision. Rather, he looked backward through his historian's rearview mirror and, employing a well-used Mennonite tactic of old, counseled with other brothers and sisters in the faith and finally came up with his Anabaptist Vision in 1944.

Fifty years after Bender's death, we would do well to keep the rearview mirror, to counsel with others and to continue in the quest for answering the question of how to be faithful to the original intent of the living Christ. In this regard, Bender himself provides a clue to an answer, in his "In Search of a City." An adapted excerpt reads:

> *In the long perspective of the four centuries that have passed since their beginnings in Switzerland and Holland, the Mennonites have often seemed to be a people without a country, wanderers upon the face of the earth, having no abiding city, seeking a City whose builder and maker is God.*
>
> *These clear-visioned, high-seeking souls purposed to build the City of God on earth. But the world would not let them, even though that world itself often professed to be also building the City of God. ... It was to be a City in which a living Christ should dwell, a Christ of love and service, around whom should gather women and men of his spirit and purpose among whom hatred and violence should be unknown.*
>
> *Many people have sometimes laughed, even scoffed at these simple souls who thought in their simplicity that it should be possible to create a fellowship of saints "without spot or wrinkle" in the midst of an evil world. But it is such scoffers and laughers who have always taken the heart out of people and have gone on leading the world into successive systems of greed, hatred and war, sometimes in the name of prosperity, sometimes in the name of patriotism and sometimes in the name of religion. ...*
>
> *In the past century and a quarter, thousands of Mennonites have found a home in the favored and tolerant commonwealths of the United States and Canada. ... Whether in these new lands of liberty they may not face more subtle dangers of assimilation, more threatening ultimately to their way of life than the outright animosity of the hostile society of old Europe, remains to be seen.*

It also remains to be seen how long the Anabaptist Vision will speak to us as current and future generations probe the mystery of that small segment of Christianity descending from the Anabaptists of long ago.—*Leonard Gross, executive director emeritus, Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church*

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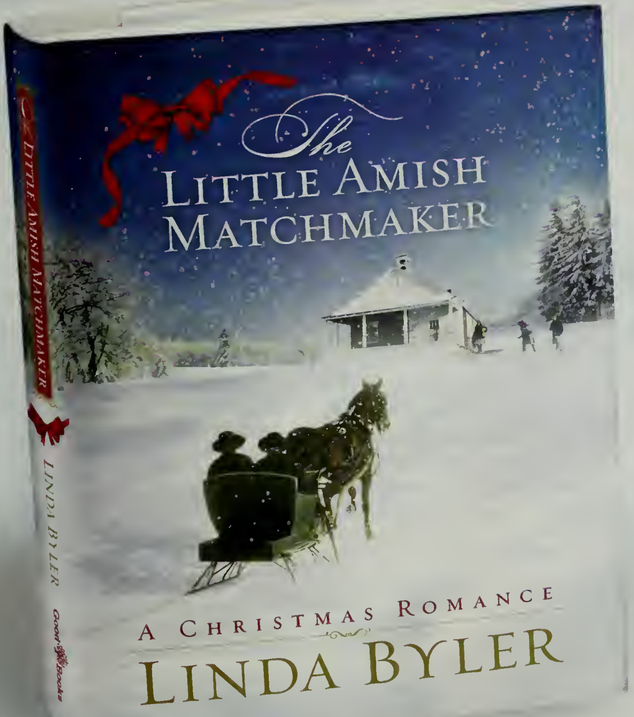
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OBITUARIES

Bender, Vida Hazel Kretchman, 91, Springs, Pa., died Aug. 20. Spouse: Byard Bender. Parents: Harry and Harriet Haselbarth Kretchman. Children: David, Beckie, Janet Bender, Nancy Stueber, Don, Jim; four grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 23 at Springs Mennonite Church, Springs.

Christner, Martha P. Leichty, 83, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 9. Spouse: Levi Christner (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Clara Harshberger Leichty. Children: James, George, Mary Letherman, Bonnie Christner, Carol Hooley; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Clapper, Gary S., 69, Red Lion, Pa., died Aug. 10. Spouse: Marian S. Ebersole Clapper. Parents: Joseph F. and Flo I. Ebersole Clapper. Children: Heather Trudel, Mark, David; six grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 14 at Forest Hill Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Godshall, Ray Willard, 79, Lansdale, Pa., died Aug. 23, of cancer. Spouse: Phyllis E. Koder Godshall. Parents: Willard and Esther Moyer Godshall. Children: Brian, Christina Wrubleski, Caroline Miller; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 23 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Gross, Emma Walter, 92, Freeman, S.D., died Aug. 4. Spouse: Joe A. Gross (deceased). Parents: Jacob F. and Sarah Hofer Walter. Children: Nancy Weber, Sherwin; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Hershberger, Neva Lou Jantz, 85, Wellman, Iowa, died Aug. 8. Spouse: Bernard M. Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Ezra and Ruth Hawkey Jantz. Children: Bernard J., Gloria Hershberger, Rita Trimpe; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 1 at Powell Funeral Home, Wellman.

Hostetler, Marvin Dean, 56, West Des Moines, Iowa, died Aug. 8. Spouse: Donnita Payne Hostetler. Parents: Samuel and Dorothy Hostetler. Children: Rachel Sterling, Josh; one grandson. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Westover Funeral Home, Urbandale, Iowa.

Johns, Galen Ira, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 5, of cancer. Spouse: Areta Graber Lehman Johns. Spouse: Edith Mae Hoover Johns (deceased). Parents: Ira Samuel and Elizabeth Rickert Johns. Children: Jeanette Johns, Steven, Lois Kaufmann, Loren, Lin, Joe Alan, Rachel Nanlee; 14 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 10 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Kleinsasser, Michael Burnell, 58, Bridgewater, S.D., died Aug. 22. Parents: Amos J. and Kathryn Hofer Kleinsasser. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Martin, Elizabeth Sauder, 102, New Holland, Pa., died May 31, of cancer. Spouse: Daniel Hoover Martin (deceased). Parents: Peter Eaby Sauder and Ida Emma Martin Sauder. Children: Mary Zehr, Luke, Aaron, Raymond, Robert, Earl, Grace Dickerson; 23 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 5 at Garden Spot Village Chapel, New Holland, Pa.

Maust, Elmer R., 90, Pigeon, Mich., died Aug. 9. Spouse: Marie Overholt Maust (death). Parents: Earl and Idella Overholt Maust. Children: Wendel D., Marge A. Maust, Marvin D., Faye D. Hurren, Gale; 10 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Pigeon River Mennonite Church, Pigeon.

Miller, Mary Louise Witmer, 84, Estes Park, Colo., died Aug. 14. Spouse: James Miller (deceased). Children: Sherie Strong, Larry; one grandchild; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 19 at Christian Church of Estes Park, Colo.

Miller, Merlin Robert, 83, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 31. Spouse: Sara Grace Hostetler Yoder Miller. Spouse: Leona Miller (deceased). Parents: Marvin E. and Katie Wenger Miller. Children: Darrell, Gerald, Dennis, Virgil, Joyce O'Bannon, Jeanette Miller, Lois Bontrager, Sandra Good; step-children: Christian Yoder, Carl Yoder, Tim Yoder, Katie Yoder Mast; 29 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 4 at Mount Pleasant Mennonite Church, Chesapeake, Va.

Peachey, Paul, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., died Aug. 18, of cancer. Spouse: Ellen Elizabeth Shenk Peachey (deceased). Parents: Shem and Salome Bender Peachey. Children: Janet Peachey, Carl, George, James, Barbara Anne Pierkarski; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 26 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Penner, Melroy Leo, 82, Mountain Lake, Minn., died Aug. 21. Parents: Peter Isaac and Anna A. Teichroew Penner. Parents: Aug. 25 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Shank, Carl E., 89, North Lima, Ohio, died Aug. 4. Spouse: Olga Csorba Shank (deceased). Parents: Walter and Mabel Spiker Shank. Children: Jeffrey, Douglas; seven grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 8 at North Lima Mennonite Church.

Snyder, Dwane Monroe, 74, Williamsburg, Iowa, died Aug. 6. Spouse: Annie Irene Schlabach Snyder. Parents: Andrew Grant and Dora Alice Kempf Snyder. Children: Annie Irene Snyder, Larry Leon, Bernice Marie Marner, Beverly Irene Helmuth, Earl Dean, Neva Colleen Sperr; 13 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

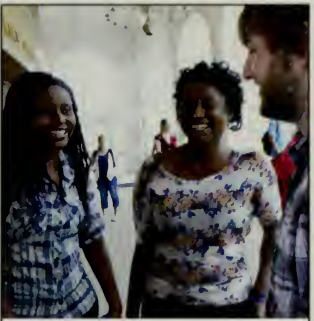
Stoll, Judith Ann Grabner, 64, South Bend, Ind., died June 17. Spouse: Herman "Jack" Stoll. Parents: Frank and Dorothy Fern Grabner. Children: Kim Porter, Kelly Tranberg, Kevin; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 21 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Stuckey, Bill E., 80, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 2. Spouse: Valetta "Becky" Stuckey. Parents: Eli and Mary Nafziger Stuckey. Children: Kathy Nofziger, Douglas, Amy Stuckey; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 6 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Weaver, Helen Esther Wiens, 82, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 18. Spouse: Samuel H. Weaver. Parents: David K. and Elizabeth "Lizzie" Wiens Weaver. Children: Michael, Matthew; two grandchildren. Funeral: July 22 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Wenger, Harold, 93, Wayland, Iowa, died July 15. Spouse: Stella M. Roth Wenger (deceased). Parents: John R. and Katie A. Christner Wenger. Children: Alice Hsu, Richard, Joanne denBleyker, Lois Klopfenstein, Rodney, Marilyn Hershberger, Ruth Ann Brenneman, Gary; 17 grandchildren; 30 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Yoder, Elsie V., 91, Columbiana, Ohio, died July 15. Parents: William R. and Emma Horst Yoder. Funeral: July 31 at North Lima Mennonite Church, North Lima, Ohio.



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EMU is a faith-based university, affiliated with Mennonite Church USA and committed to peacebuilding and cross-cultural understanding. Its main campus is located in Harrisonburg, Va., a small, diverse city in the scenic Shenandoah Valley.

To apply, send a letter of application and resumé to Fred Kniss, Provost, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, or e-mail provost@emu.edu. For more information, visit our website: www.emu.edu/humanresources. EOE

The Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference is accepting applications for the position of ***conference administrator***, a 10-hour a week position, in the Los Angeles area. The administrator provides essential coordination and logistical support and is the administrative focal point for the conference minister, board of directors and affiliated groups. Send resumé to dickdavis@pacificsouthwest.org.

Bluffton University invites applications for the following full-time, tenure-track faculty positions to begin fall 2013.

Education—elementary generalist: Doctorate preferred and required for tenure. Minimum three years teaching experience in early elementary grades required. Experience teaching literacy courses in a college-level teacher licensure program highly desirable. Teach undergraduate and graduate early childhood [Pre-K to grade 3] and elementary [grades 4-5] education courses. Supervise teacher education candidates in various field and clinical practice settings.

Food and nutrition: Ph.D. (or doctorate in progress) in food and nutrition, dietetics or related field with demonstrated teaching experience. Registered dietitian with appropriate state licensure is required. Dietetics practice and Didactic Program in Dietetics experience preferred.

Review of applications for these positions begins Oct. 15 and continues until an appointment is made. Compensation is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. See www.bluffton.edu/about/employment. Bluffton University welcomes applications from all academically qualified people who respect the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace church tradition and endorse Christian higher education in a liberal arts environment. Members of under-represented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Beth-El Mennonite Church of Colorado Springs, Colo., is seeking a ***half-time junior/senior youth pastor***. Compensation will be based on Mennonite Church USA guidelines. Contact Mountain States Conference Minister, Herm Weaver at 303-258-7589, herm@Mountainstatesmc.org.

East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church seeks ***full-time pastor***. Our 180-member congregation in the City of Lancaster, Pa., attracts children, young adults, families and older people. Members are involved in the congregation's neighborhood, Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite World Conference and Lancaster County Council of Churches. Many serve in business, church agencies and various professions. Our congregation seeks to:

- be transformed by God's mercy, grace and love;
- introduce our children and neighbors to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- equip one another to live peaceably and generously; and
- contribute to the well-being of Lancaster City and the wider world.

To lead that effort, our congregation seeks a pastor with Anabaptist perspective and a seminary degree, preferably with experience in congregational leadership. For information, contact Search Committee Chair Elvin Kraybill (elvin.kraybill@gmail.com) or Lancaster District Overseer and Search Committee member Jason Kuniholm (jkuniholm@gmail.com).

Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) seeks qualified candidates for ***vice president and undergraduate academic dean*** to lead the undergraduate division of the university, working collaboratively with the graduate and seminary divisions. The successful candidate will provide vision for program quality and development; guide long-range strategic planning; oversee day-to-day operations of undergraduate programs; develop and monitor program budgets; recruit and hire undergraduate faculty; supervise department chairs; communicate effectively and work collegially.

Qualifications: leadership and administrative expertise; doctoral degree in a relevant discipline; strong record of teaching and scholarship; commitment to the mission of Mennonite/Anabaptist higher education.

EMU's academic programs include an undergraduate division with 14 departments and 47 majors, a graduate division with six master's programs, and a seminary offering several advanced degrees. EMU is a faith-based university, affiliated with Mennonite Church USA and committed to peacebuilding and cross-cultural understanding. Its main campus is located in Harrisonburg, Va., a small, diverse city in the scenic Shenandoah Valley.

To apply, send a letter of application and resumé to Fred Kniss, Provost, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, or e-mail provost@emu.edu. For more information, visit our website: www.emu.edu/humanresources. EOE

Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) seeks qualified candidates for ***vice president and dean of graduate studies*** to lead the graduate division of the university. We seek candidates with an entrepreneurial outlook and strong management skills who will provide vision for program quality and development, guide long-range strategic planning, inspire and facilitate the development of new graduate programs, oversee day-to-day operations and budget management, recruit and hire excellent graduate faculty, assess programs, communicate effectively and work collegially. Depending on interest and qualifications, the appointment may include part-time involvement in one of EMU's graduate programs.

Qualifications: leadership and administrative expertise; doctoral degree in an appropriate discipline; strong record of teaching, scholarship and/or professional practice; commitment to the mission of Mennonite/Anabaptist higher education.

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The Save and Serve Thrift Shop of Millersburg, Ohio, is seeking a full-time ***merchandise coordinator***. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology and be committed to the shop's support of Mennonite Central Committee. Responsibilities: Manage the processing and retail sales of donations to the shop; work with day managers and other volunteers in this; be responsible to shop manager and the board. Retail and marketing experience preferred. This position requires strong interpersonal skills, self-motivation, an ability to make decisions individually and in team settings, and creativity in initiating and executing projects with minimal direct supervision. Good communication skills, verbal and written, are essential. The position is salaried and includes benefits. A complete job description is available upon request. Please submit resumé to Sara King: mskingyoder@gmail.com. Deadline for applications is Oct. 15, 2012.

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I certify that all information furnished in this is true and complete.
Everett J. Thomas, Editor

Polity matters in our churches

Janet Trevino-Elizarraz lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.

How we see church power and where that power lies within the church/conference influences our struggles with other issues.

It's interesting what a little church polity and a history lesson can do to inform your church service experience and give it meaning. This story is mine, a young person's perspective that I'm sure is limited in scope. Nevertheless, it shaped my ministry to the church.

More than four years ago, I was invited to serve Texas Mennonites as their treasurer at an important crossroads for the Mid-Texas Fellowship. At the assembly that year and the months that followed, four important events shaped the future of the fellowship, whose name at the same time would be changed to the Texas Mennonite Convention (TMC). First, all the churches in Texas could no longer hold dual-conference status and had to join either Western District Conference (WDC) or South Central Conference (SCC). Second, the entire coordinating council for the fellowship would change. Third, this council would be given new guidelines that would outline steps into greater autonomy from any conference. Fourth, later that year, the associate conference minister for the WDC would exit, and a new one would be appointed for Texas.

As the marriage between General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) and the Mennonite Church (MC) created the unity of Mennonite Church USA, the children (and may I call myself a grandchild?) have a lot of sorting to work through.

The churches had to choose the conference that best served the congregation's needs, but the future of the TMC was not considered in the shuffle of the divorce of two conferences that for years had been trying to parent this union of two denominations. The majority of churches chose WDC over the mother-creator of the Mid-Texas Fellowship, SCC. They chose the father who had more resources to support them and maybe a similar theological/values system, especially for the women, as the GC churches seemed historically to create a space for women leaders.

By default TMC moved under WDC authority, and one can see that WDC comes from a GC legacy that supports individual churches, whereas MC churches had a system that encouraged power at a more local level within the unity and fellowship of churches. No one seemed to consider the systemic difference between WDC and SCC until they saw the consequences of choosing their conference.

What became clear was that the TMC didn't have a place in the WDC system because it understood power as centralized in the individual churches, and the voice of TMC (strongly Latino, mind you) was no longer heard. After a year of trying to find a way to work with WDC, the TMC moderator resigned. The secretary and I worked together to bring unity, and in an effort to hear the different voices within Texas at a scheduled assembly meeting, a significant number of churches declined to attend.

The discouraged secretary resigned, leaving me to hold the reins of an institution the WDC system didn't have a place for systematically and an associate conference minister who didn't at times recognize my leadership with this Texas convention because I was not a pastor or under the WDC system. Here I was trying single-handedly to call the churches to make a decision on the future of TMC.

Last year, as my final attempt, I worked to organized a financial assembly that lacked organizational support, and it didn't come to fruition. After speaking to a Texas pastor friend, she encouraged me to walk away. These obstacles were evidence that the end had come (at least for me). That morning, I resigned from TMC, knowing full well that TMC would end without a proper, communal burial or deserved recognition. I grieved and burned with anger that the money I was entrusted would possibly not go into the hands of Texas pastors but in WDC's.

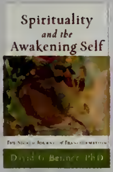
That night, at 2 a.m., I had a gallbladder attack that sent me to the hospital with pains like being in labor. I could hardly breathe. There I experienced the death of TMC through a day of tears, angst and anger, and I alone buried her. My hope is that with my healing a birth of something new may be happening in Texas, something only the Spirit knows.

This story shows what I believe to be true and a call for a more honest conversation about how polity—how we see church power and where that power lies within the church/conference—influences our struggles with other issues, such as homosexuality within the church, immigration, the "purity" of our Anabaptism and diversity of cultures among many other issues. As Mennonite Church USA continues to work on its unity, let's remember polity matters now more than ever.

FILM REVIEW

Ruby Sparks (R) is a delightfully weird fable about a young writer suffering writer's block. Then his therapist tells him to write about the woman who appears in his dreams. When he does, she appears just as he imagined her. What ensues is a carefully paced love story as the writer learns about love and his inability to control it.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS



Spirituality and the Awakening Self: the Sacred Journey of Transformation by David G. Benner (Brazos Press, 2012, $19.99) is not interested in some feel-good spirituality but in transformation. Benner, a psychologist, writes that "while deep and really meaningful changes in people are relatively rare, they are very possible." He draws on the work of others and tells stories of clients as he explores the self and how to seek an awakening to the experience of God.—*gh*

Please Pass the Faith: The Art of Spiritual Grandparenting by Elsie H.R. Rempel (Herald Press, 2012, $12.99) explores how seniors and other adults can build relationships with children and youth. Rempel looks at how faith grows and matures and points to the importance of stories and holiday celebrations. This is a practical and helpful guide.

Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life, edited by Michael W. Austin and Douglas Geivett (Eerdmans, 2012, $26) includes essays on 11 key virtues: faith, open-mindedness, wisdom, zeal, hope, contentment, courage, love, compassion, forgiveness and humility. While the subtitle mentions "everyday life," the writers are academics, I presume (we're not told), who tend to get caught up in definitions and nuances and don't make many connections with everyday life.—*gh*

Prejudice and religious ignorance

We all carry prejudices. We prejudge others, make assumptions about them, often out of ignorance about those people and what they may believe.

Mennonites are used to being misunderstood, both in negative and positive ways. How often do we hear others ask about horse and buggies or plain black clothing when they hear we are Mennonites?

On the other hand, some people laud Mennonites for being so committed to peace and justice, not realizing the great diversity in our ranks on those subjects.

Much of our media betrays great ignorance about religion—not just Mennonites but many religious groups. And if you spend much time on the blogosphere, you encounter great ignorance as people spout views that are at times hateful, certainly prejudiced and that show ignorance about the groups they are putting down in order to advance their own views.

One of the groups most commonly misunderstood are Muslims, whose numbers are growing rapidly in the United States. And worldwide Islam is the second largest religion.

Nevertheless, it is treated as monolithic and homogenous. As religion scholar Philip Jenkins writes, "Arguably, over the span of its development, Islam worldwide is quite as diverse as Christianity."

One of the stereotypes about Islam is that it is Arab, yet, Jenkins writes, "Of the world's eight largest Muslim countries, only one—Egypt—is Arab in language and culture, and it would not be too far off the mark to see Islam as a religion of South and Southeast Asia."

A recent book, *Woman, Man and God in Modern Islam* by Theodore Friend (Eerdmans, 2012, $35), is an excellent source for getting to know modern Islam.

Friend, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and an award-winning historian, traveled across Asia and the Middle East in order to understand firsthand the life situations of women in Indonesia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. The book relates hundreds of encounters and conversations with people he met along the way.

Friend writes that the reader will find "respect for Islam conjoined with faith in women and in their creative and productive potential."

Meanwhile the media regularly report bombings by Islamicists but ignore peaceful overtures by Muslims, such as "A Common Word" in 2007.

Ignorance of religion has enormous consequences, whether it's a white supremacist killing Sikhs or U.S. soldiers burning copies of the Qur'an or the U.S. invasion of Iraq helping overturn half a century of women's right to be treated as equal citizens in Iraq.

Religious ignorance extends beyond Islam. Every day some media reinforce views of religious groups that are simplistic and fail to build understanding.

One media source that helps counter this practice is Religion News Service. For example, the weekly report dated Sept. 5 included an article on Mormons okaying Coke and Pepsi, one on Seventh-day Adventists arguing about female clergy, a Q&A with Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf of the "Ground Zero mosque," one on Jews in New Orleans, a Q&A with David Niose, president of the American Humanist Association, and one on the trial of Amish bishop Samuel Mullet Sr., whose followers forcibly cut the beards of Amish men.

There are many sources for learning about others and their beliefs before we make judgments about them. Jesus' warning about judging others (Matthew 7:1) is pertinent.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

RESOURCES

The Space Between: A Christian Engagement with the Built Environment by Eric O. Jacobsen (BakerAcademic, 2012, $22.99) develops a framework for understanding the built environment and addresses timely and controversial topics such as gentrification, urban sprawl and energy consumption. Using tools from theology and culture, he shows how looking at the built environment through a theological lens provides a unique perspective on questions of beauty, justice and human flourishing.

I Remember: Bonded Labor, Quicksand and Good News for Thousands by Das Maddimadugu, compiled and edited by David Janzen (Resource Publications, 2012, $16), recalls the joys and tragedies of a childhood in a destitute family of the untouchable caste, nearly sold into slavery and "adopted" by a single Mennonite missionary woman. Later a network of friends becomes an innovative partnership in Jesus' mission of good news to the poor for thousands of students, hundreds of orphans, a score of churches and a series of disaster relief projects.

Taking Jesus at His Word: What Jesus Really Said in the Sermon on the Mount by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) is written for those brave enough to reconsider what Jesus really said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Please Pass the Faith: The Art of Spiritual Grandparenting by Elsie H.R. Rempel (Herald Press, 2012, $12.99) draws from real life and from Christian formation experts in helping seniors and other adults foster relationships with children and youth. Rempel offers practical ideas for integrating children and youth into church life.

Seven Things Children Need by John M. Drescher (Herald Press, 2012, $10.99) is a revised edition of a classic that has sold over 125,000 copies and translated into nearly 20 languages. Drescher discusses seven of the most basic needs of the growing child: significance, security, acceptance, love, praise, discipline and God.

As the Wind Blows by Donald R. Jacobs (Mastof Press, 2012, $14.99) revisits several decisive moments in the author's Blough and Jacobs family lines, covering a span of 250 years, and retells those stories by weaving known facts with what must have transpired between the characters and life situations; what the characters must have done, dreaded and dreamed of.

The Imitation of Christ: Selections Annotated and Explained by Thomas à Kempis, annotation by Paul Wesley Chilcote (SkyLight Paths, 2012, $16.99), is based on John Wesley's popular 1741 abridgment of the spiritual classic. A commentary clarifies the text's roots and explains its influence through the years.

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Signposts: A worshipping community

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.—Acts 2:46-47 (TNIV)

Luke's lavish portrayal of the worship at First Church of Jerusalem makes me feel a little envious. I think that's a good thing. At least I sense that was Luke's goal in writing Acts—to stir up holy ambition for a vital faith. Those first followers of Jesus in Jerusalem worshiped in a winsome way, wooing new people into the fellowship as God opened the way.

As part of my role as executive director, I am privileged to worship with many congregations across Mennonite Church USA. I can tell that some of these congregations really enjoy being together. They greet one another with enthusiasm and join heartily in worship. They exude hospitality for guests and linger for a time after the service. These experiences always give me hope for the future.

The truth is, without enthusiastic engagement with God in worship, no church is likely to thrive or attract new people. The quality of the worship service contributes to the mission of the church, as explained below:

Missional character trait: Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.

Signpost: There is significant and meaningful engagement in communal worship of God, reflecting appropriately and addressing the culture of those who worship together.

When the saving power and presence of God is evident in worship, it draws new people into the fellowship. Especially in today's entertainment culture, we may be tempted to substitute glitz and glitter for the authentic gold of the gospel. What matters most is that worshippers have a sense that they have encountered the true and living God, not just the projection of their human longings.

The Apostle Paul laid out recommendations for the worship services at Corinth. He voiced the possibility that when certain actions take place in the service, newcomers will exclaim, "God is really among you" (1 Corinthians 14:25).

Sadly, many in Mennonite Church USA are less engaged in worship than we were a decade ago. Our worship habits have changed, and sometimes they move us in the wrong direction. If you don't worship weekly with a congregation, what do you put in its place? I'm defining "congregation" broadly here. I could include small groups meeting at times other than Sunday morning.

Even though my responsibilities take me across Mennonite Church USA, I make it a practice to be in my home congregation half the Sundays of the year. That's because I need these times of corporate worship. I have not found an adequate substitute for face-to-face meetings in worship. For me, participating in a regular church service or small group is an essential part of celebrating God's mission in the world.

I belong to a Sunday school class that has a practice of looking for evidence of God in each worship service. As our group reflects on God's movement among us, we see it in many different ways.

It's often during times of corporate worship that I sense most deeply the goodness and graciousness of God. It may sound strange, but I often feel the deepest emotion in my home congregation at the time we receive the offering. After we give our offering, we stand and sing a doxology as the ushers lift our tithes and offerings before God. It's a time of enthusiastic praise and thanksgiving for God's good gifts. For me, it is a vivid reminder that God has blessed me in more ways than I can count. Such generosity inspires me to pursue God's mission with vigor and enthusiasm. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

Without enthusiastic engagement with God in worship, no church is likely to thrive or attract new people.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Election day Communion

Everett J. Thomas

If engaging in the political process ruptures our fellowship, then temporal matters have crowded God out of the body of Christ.

If the current ugliness of the election season taints relationships between brothers and sisters within the church, that's evidence of "ballot-box idolatry." So says a Mennonite pastor whose appeal for an election-day Communion service has gone viral on the Internet (see page 24 and the box below).

Mark Schloneger is attempting to help Christians across ecumenical lines find unity "in the midst of theological, political and denominational differences." The website www.electionday-communion.org lays out a simple suggestion: Remember the body of Christ as the body of Christ, confessing the ways partisan politics has separated us from one another and from God.

In spite of the cacophony generated by this presidential election, I doubt it is the worst our country has ever experienced. I also doubt that Mennonites have been oblivious or immune to other, earlier election tensions. For example, last year the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society received a broadside (campaign poster) from the 1801 election. The poster called on Christians to vote against Thomas Jefferson. The propaganda was found in the attic of a Mennonite family, and it claimed Jefferson was not a Christian.

While the level of vitriol during this election season may not be all that extraordinary, what is different is Mennonite involvement. According to the most recent data, 51 percent of Mennonite Church USA members identify as Republicans, 22 percent as Democrats, and 11 percent as independents (*Road Signs for the Journey,* 2006).

But what is most striking about this data is the change in participation: In 1972, 37 percent did not identify with any political party. By 2006, only 11 percent refrained from partisan politics.

The problem is that different parts of our theology resonate with differing positions promoted by the political parties. For example, some of us care most about stopping abortions or slowing the trend toward same-sex marriage. Others of us care most about making sure the government takes care of the poorest in society and removing legal impediments to same-sex marriage.

These are deeply held convictions, and they polarize us. But if engaging in the political process to advocate for such issues ruptures our fellowship, then such temporal matters have crowded out our awareness of God's presence in the Body of Christ. And that is idolatry.

There is an antidote. Vote on Election Day and then return to what matters most: the unity of the body of Christ. The most visceral way to express this unity is to share the cup and break bread with other Christian brothers and sisters. In doing so after an ugly election season, we join all those who have followed Christ in previous millenia, all those around the world who may care a lot or little about our elections, and all those not yet living who will be the church in the future.—*ejt*

Election Day Communion

On Nov. 6, 2012, Election Day, we will exercise our right to choose.

Some of us will choose to vote for Barack Obama.

Some of us will choose to vote for Mitt Romney.

Some of us will choose to vote for another candidate.

Some of us will choose not to vote.

During the day of Nov. 6, we will make different choices for different reasons, hoping for different results. But that evening while our nation turns its attention to the outcome of the presidential election, let's again choose differently. But this time, let's do it together. … Let's meet at the Lord's Table. Let's remember together.

Source: electiondaycommunion.org

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- Amish growth enriches all of us
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TheMennonite November 2012 | Volume 15, Number 11

CONTENTS

AMBS LIBRARY ELKHART

12 Kingdom shoes
—Ariel Ropp

16 A church welcomes refugees
—David Shenk

19 Two-way learning
—Melanie Hess

22 12 signs of the kingdom
—Tobin Miller Shearer

25 Miracle on 15th Street, Anywhere, USA
—Wanda Bouwman

28 Questions to women leaders
—Cora Brown

29 Blessed are the peacemakers
—Ken Gingerich

32 Mission needs Toba-Qom language
—Andrew Clouse

34 Three ways churches relate to mission boards
—Nita Landis

36 Refugee returns home, finds strangers on his land—Gladys Terichow

37 Three Ohio congregations plant a new church
—Hilary J. Scarsella

38 Michigan men meet above and beyond
—Anna Groff

40 Cash cow or a chance to share?—Melodie Davis

44 Whatever happened to Diamong Street?
—Freeman Miller

ON THE COVER: Photo by David Fisher Fast

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
47 For the Record
50 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

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November 2012 | Volume 15, Number 11

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POSTMASTER send address changes to:
The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1703
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

Mennonite
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USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

To vote or not to vote

I guess all this pontificating about whether or not Mennonites should vote (Dan Hertzler's article in *TMail*, the petition that Berry Friesen and John Stoner started) is to be expected in a presidential election year. I get the theological struggle and the "no perfect candidate" compromise. Yet it strikes me as a huge white privilege—to be able to muse over the options and to throw around some theo-political weight.

Could we hear from some Mennonites of color about why they vote and why they think the rest of us should vote? When and how will the church hear their voices? Can we at least consider what theological unity we might seek in an intercultural way?—*Sharon Williams, Norristown, Pa.*

Editor's note: TMail *is a free weekly electronic magazine (ezine) that occasionally has articles not published in print. Email annag@themennonite.org to subscribe.*

Pro-life is more than pro-birth

I am pro-life and applaud those who take that stand. However, I am disturbed by those who claim to be pro-life but in reality are only pro-birth. Based on their legislative records, this includes many politicians at the national level and, even more disturbing, many who continue to vote them in year after year and do not hold them accountable for improving life after birth.

Pro-birth politicians promote themselves as pro-life while running for office, but once elected it's apparent they are unconcerned with the quality of a child's life after birth, showing little regard for our youngest citizens' continued welfare. They oppose health-care legislation that could help children. They oppose spending money to educate our children. They oppose legislation that could improve the quality of the air our children and we breathe.

Most children are born into middle- or low-income families, yet pro-birth politicians promote cutting funding that could help these families. They occasionally talk about concern for the middle class but seldom express concern for low-income people. Their overwhelming legislative effort goes into protecting tax breaks and loopholes for the wealthy and large corporations. And that is where their money for re-election comes from.

Many of them are part of the wealthy group they want the tax breaks for. Americans have fed the greed of this group too long already, at great cost to ourselves and our children.

Even with a tax hike for the wealthy, children of the upper class will continue to receive all they need in health care, education and all the other necessities of life, plus much more. Many children in America are suffering because of the lack of health care, education and the bare necessities of life. Parents of these children are not looking for a hand out—the majority of them want to work and be able to take care of their families.

Being pro-birth is terrific for children when it includes being pro-life and when life goes all the way up to and includes senior citizens. As a pro-life advocate and former school principal, I believe strongly in doing all we can to help the children of this country make their way through life to become the best citizens they can be.—*B.J. Miller, Goshen, Ind.*

Treatment of the president

The treatment of our duly elected president by Christians should be of concern to each of us. He has become half-black; when many of us voted for him, he was half-white. Many Christians voted for Obama partly as reparation for our past treatment of blacks.

As a student in a Christian school in Virginia, I was shocked to learn that blacks could not use white drinking fountains or restrooms or the front of a public bus. I was more surprised that I do not ever hear my church teaching that segregation was wrong.

Please let us live our Christian life as the Scriptures tell us.—*Ralph D. Martin, Goshen, Ind.*

Thinking about Muslim sisters

I think of my Muslim sisters who labor for justice and dream of peace as I wash dishes and pay bills. I wonder if their lives resemble more my hopes or my fears. As a cruel video sets the world aspin once more, I imagine their strong voices unheard in the din of extremism. I see their quiet, livelong actions, witness to a better way. In my mind's eye, I watch as they work to keep their children safe and sane.

I do, too. I know my life to be comfortable and secure. But I'm no stranger to extremism right next door. How is it that people lean in to hear the voice that speaks loudest and tune out the quiet chorus breathing life?

The radio and TV shout angry Christian rhetoric (mostly men), and to prove their point splash up images of angry Muslims (mostly men). And we listen. We see. We believe.

I step away from the rush to seek out other sources and discover a whole new world where hate doesn't lead the dance. These are quieter voices.

History is a great teacher. Will we learn? Those who demand attention, power, pride and seldom speak truth. Justice isn't front-page news. Dreams of peace seem to wait for us in the shadows of the day.

Islam's Holy Book says, "God guides those who seek his good pleasure into the ways of peace, bringing them out from the shadows into the light by his act of will and guiding them into a straight path."

In my Holy Book, we are instructed to look to our children as a guide for what is right and true. A quieter voice in the global conversation I cannot imagine. My mother ears are tuned. *—Lynn Schlosser, Pawnee Rock, Kan.*

Marpeck Fund gave $4,000

I appreciated the news article "Consultation Held for New Martyrs Mirror" (September). But I was disappointed there was no mention that the Marpeck Fund contributed $4,000 to underwrite the travel costs of those attending.

The Marpeck Fund was established in 1993 by Robert and Gerald Kreider for the enrichment of Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., Bluffton (Ohio) College and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary). Over the years, two Canadian institutions (Canadian Mennonite University and Conrad Grebel University College) and four former Mennonite Church institutions—Eastern Mennonite Seminary and Eastern Mennonite University, both in Harrisonburg, Va., Goshen (Ind.) College, and Hesston (Kan.) College—have been added to the list.

The fund encourages ties among Mennonite colleges and seminaries through joint faculty workshops, student participation in inter-campus conferences, faculty exchange visits and lectures, and cooperative program planning. The fund (now in excess of $1 million) is managed by the Mennonite Foundation and administered by the academic deans of the nine member institutions.—*Dale R. Schrag, director of church relations at Bethel College and recording secretary of the Marpeck deans*

IN THIS ISSUE

November is missions month in Mennonite Church USA, and we again publish several mission stories provided by the Mennonite Mission Network. They include the inspiring story of Kuaying Teng (page 12), whose leg was crippled by polio as a child.

Another story features a congregation in Ecuador that cares for refugees from Colombia forced from their homes (page 16).

A school's Youth Venture team and a Hispanic congregation learning from each other (page 19) is the third article in the special theme section on missions.

This issue carries several other mission-related articles beyond those in theme section. However, the News Analysis looks at the other end of a successful and well-known urban mission project. We commissioned former bishop Freeman Miller to write "Whatever Happened to Diamond Street?" (page 44).

An article describing "a clumsy congregation" is taken from a sermon Tobin Miller Shearer preached more than 10 years ago (page 22).

Wanda Bouwman describes the last minutes of her mother's life and the gift she received from her (page 25).

In Miscellany (page 10), associate editor Gordon Houser describes the near-death experience reported by a neurosurgeon, and the woman leader describing her life and ministry is Cora Brown (page 28).

Ken Gingerich (page 29) explains why he keeps a "Blessed Are the Peacemakers" bumper sticker on his car and how it reminds him to behave on the road.

Finally, we publish the MennoMedia story of Charlotte Penner, one of 10 writers whose book *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* is described as either a "cash cow" or a chance to share personal stories (page 40).—*Editor*

Geyer sentenced to three to nine years in prison

LANCASTER, Pa.—A prosecutor described a former assistant principal at Lancaster Mennonite High School as "akin to a sex trafficker" during his sentencing on Wednesday.

A Lancaster County judge subsequently ordered Steven J. Geyer, who admitted molesting three foreign exchange students, to spend 3 to 9 years in state prison.

Geyer forced the Korean students to perform sex acts at his East Lampeter township home in 2009-11 and threatened to have them sent back home if they didn't comply, according to testimony.

Geyer had hoped to apologize to the three victims, who were between the ages of 12 and 16 when the crimes occurred.

The judge explained that he is limited by state sentencing guidelines. He also said he credited Geyer for pleading guilty and conceding that he is a sexually violent predator.

Upon release, Geyer, under Megan's law, must register his whereabouts with police for the rest of his life. *—Lancaster Online*

Three churches leave Western, Central districts

NEWTON, Kan.—Three congregations have withdrawn from two Mennonite Church USA area conferences due to differences over issues of sexuality.

Two congregations, House of Healing Mennonite Church, Dallas, Texas, and Eden Mennonite Church, Inola, Okla., left Western District Conference after delegates upheld a decision not to discipline a pastor for performing a same-sex ceremony.

Conference minister Clarence Rempel reported the withdrawals Oct. 2 in an email to congregations and pastors.

Boynton Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill., has left Central District Conference and is joining the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches after three same-sex civil unions were conducted by Megan Ramer, pastor of Chicago Community Mennonite Church, last year.

Conference minister Lois Johns Kaufmann said Boynton Mennonite began discerning its ties to the conference soon after the 2009 Mennonite Church USA convention in Columbus, Ohio. Boynton brought its decision to the CDC annual meeting in June. *—Mennonite World Review*

Jodi H. Beyeler/Goshen College Public Relations Office

Goshen commemorates professor's tragic death

Biology professor Jim Miller's family prays during Goshen College's remembrance service Oct. 9, commemorating the one-year anniversary of his tragic death. From left are his sister, Kathy Fenton-Miller; his mother, Elizabeth Jeschke; his wife, Linda; his son Robert, his daughter Leanne, his daughter Lisa Rose Martin and his grandson Jared Martin.—*Goshen College*

MWC peace audit report now available on website

A report on the results of a recent peace audit of Mennonite World Conference member churches is now available at www.mwc-cmm.org, the MWC website. The report is based on the results of a 2011-2012 survey of MWC member churches, asking the question: How is your church doing in its desire to be a peace church?

The MWC Peace Commission prepared the question. It received written responses from 21 of the 100 MWC member churches—six from Asia and the Pacific, six from Latin America and the Caribbean, three from Europe and six from North America.

"The responses provide profound windows into the lives of these churches," says Peace Commission secretary Robert J. Suderman.—*MWC*

Adult Bible Study materials available in Spanish

HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ont.—To meet the changing needs of the church, MennoMedia is making available its Adult Bible Study materials in a Spanish-language version and moving to use the New International Version 2011 for Bible quotations in the English version.

Adult Bible Study materials are now available to Spanish-language churches as Estudios Bíblicos para Adultos (EBA). For one and one-half years, 16 congregations have evaluated prototype EBA curriculum in Sunday school or Bible school groups. With their feedback, MennoMedia has shaped EBA to be an effective Spanish-language Bible study resource from an Anabaptist perspective.—*MennoMedia*

Mennonites, Catholics meet at Bridgefolk 2012

SAINT JOSEPH, Minn.—Forty Mennonites and Catholics gathered July 26-29 at Saint Benedict's monastery for the 11th annual Bridgefolk conference.

Bridgefolk is a movement of sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who come together to celebrate each other's traditions, explore each other's practices and honor each other's contribution to the mission of Christ's church.

This year's conference was the third in a series on shared practices central to the Christian life and was organized around the theme "Formed in the Word: Scripture and Peacemaking." Keynote speakers were Michael Patella (Saint John's Abbey) and Helmut Harder (Mennonite Church Canada), who gave presentations on Catholic and Mennonite ways of interpreting and applying Scripture.—*Bridgefolk*

Gather 'Round receives support from a variety of Christian groups

HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ont.—Now in its seventh year, the *Gather 'Round* curriculum for children and youth jointly published by MennoMedia and Brethren Press continues to attract attention from a variety of Christians beyond Brethren and Mennonites.

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church has just signed on as an endorsing partner, and Gather 'Round recently received a strong endorsement from popular Christian author Brian McLaren.

Gather 'Round is a joint project of Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, and the Church of the Brethren.

Three other denominations continue as cooperating partners: the United Church of Christ (UCC), the Mennonite Brethren, and the Moravian Church. They order prepublication quantities of the materials and sell directly to their congregations.—*MennoMedia*

Jim Bishop

Virginia sale sets record

Connor Bowman, 11, of Linville, Va., makes an omelet for a customer in the breakfast line Oct. 6 at the 46th annual Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale held Oct. 5-6 in Harrisonburg. This year's sale raised $307,027 for Mennonite Central Committee, up from last year's total of $301,477.—*Jim Bishop*

Photo provided

HYDE PARK
MENNONITE FELLO

Pastor rides 730 miles for installation at church

Marc Schlegel and his girlfriend, Jenna Preheim, pose in front of the sign for Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship in Boise, Idaho, where Schlegel was installed as pastor on Oct. 14. The couple rode their bikes from San Francisco to Boise, a journey of 730 miles.—*Beth Landis*

Speech winner describes real Occupy movement

AKRON, Pa.—Lauren Treiber, a junior at Goshen (Ind.) College, won first prize in the 2012 C. Henry Smith Oratorical Contest for her speech "The Real Occupy Movement: Understanding Capitalism in a Christian Context."

In her speech, Treiber, from Grand Rapids, Mich., empathized with those affected by economic inequities that have led to the "Occupy Wall Street" movement. The Occupy movement, which began in September 2011, struggles for improvement in measurable terms in the lives of the 99 percent of the global population who are not part of the world's wealthiest 1 percent.

Treiber suggested that both the 1 percent and the 99 percent miss what is foundational for social betterment. —*MCC*

Best summer ever

Ron Adams is the pastor at Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

It's September as I write this. School is back in session. Fall is just around the corner. Summer is on its way toward being a memory.

When I was a child, it was the habit of my teachers to begin the school year by having students report on what they had done during their summer vacations. For those who'd been to some exotic place, like the beach or the mountains, it was a chance to boast. For those of us who'd spent our summers playing in our backyards, it was a chance to try our hands at fiction. We'd work to make our backyards sound as exciting as any old trip to the beach. More exciting even. In short, we'd lie.

In fond memory of those long-ago reports, I'd like to tell you what I did on my summer vacation. Trust me, it's all true. The true parts anyway.

Most of my summer was a continuation of the seasons before it. I went to the office, wrote and read a million emails, had coffee with folks, read *The Mennonite* and other things, wrote sermons, preached sermons. The usual.

> I felt a spark.
> I remembered a miracle.
> I gave my heart to Jesus
> all over again.

But about halfway through the summer, I spent a week at Camp Menno Haven. I was pastor for the senior high camp, which mostly meant offering a daily chapel presentation.

I'd never spent a week at summer camp before, at least that I can remember. I did not know what to expect. I am about as unrustic as a human being can be. I don't do well when deprived of the amenities of Western civilization, things like hot showers and comfortable beds. Don't bother emailing me. I know I am a wimp.

What a relief to discover that my digs at camp were more than comfortable. I was treated well. The food was good, the staff was friendly and welcoming, and the accommodations were lovely. I even had my own bathroom.

The theme for chapel that week was "Encountering Jesus." We looked at the story of Jesus healing the bleeding woman, Jesus and Zaccheus, Jesus and the Samaritan woman. We reflected together on what those stories tell us about our own encounters with Jesus.

Before I tell you what happened, I need to tell you this. I've been a Christian so long that I take a lot for granted—like the fact that I am a Christian. It has been years since I've thought about my conversion experience, years since I've remembered the wonder of it. It all seemed old hat to me.

One of the stories we used at camp was that of Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul believed he was already righteous but out of the blue got knocked silly by Jesus. It's a story of an unexpected encounter with Jesus.

During the meditation, I shared my conversion story. My encounter was also unexpected. It happened at a Christian rock concert by Andre Crouch and the Disciples. I was in high school. I didn't want to go to the concert or to be a Christian or to have anything to do with Jesus. My parents made me go.

Wouldn't you know it? The concert was over. Andre gave an altar call. And out of the blue I got sideswiped by the Holy Spirit. Next thing I knew, I was sobbing and offering myself to Jesus.

What I want to tell you is this: As I was telling that story to the campers, I teared up. My heart skipped a beat. What I intended as a simple illustration became something alive inside me. I remembered what it felt like to come to Jesus for the first time. My body remembered, too. In that moment it was 1972 again. I was giving in to the Spirit of Christ. All teary and shaking and alive for the first time.

I left that chapel service stunned by that suddenly alive memory. Who'd have believed it? I was a Christian. I'm still a Christian. What a wonder!

So that's what happened to me on my summer vacation. I felt a spark. I remembered a miracle. I gave my heart to Jesus all over again.

It was maybe the best summer ever. TM

Amish growth enriches all of us

The figures are by now familiar. In 1978, there were roughly 610,000 Anabaptists in the world; today, a little more than three decades later, that number has nearly tripled, with the most dramatic increases taking place in Africa (700 percent growth), Latin America (400 percent) and Asia (nearly 300 percent). The story that usually accompanies these figures is also familiar: Anabaptist churches in the Global South are growing; Anabaptist churches in Europe and North America are in decline.

But that conclusion is only partially true. Although membership in the groups who merged in 2002 to form Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada has indeed remained stagnant, it may come as a surprise to discover that, overall, the number of Anabaptists in North America has grown significantly during the past 30 years, increasing from some 313,000 baptized members in 1978 to more than 535,000 in 2010.

The biggest single factor behind that growth is the remarkable expansion of the Old Order Amish. Already in 1992, historian Steven Nolt called attention to the demographic fact that during the course of the 20th century, the population of the Amish had nearly doubled every two decades, making it one of the fastest-growing religious groups in the United States. Now, in a report released this past summer, researchers have confirmed that this growth has continued into the 21st century. Today there are nearly 250,000 Old Order Amish in the United States and Canada; if the current trajectory continues, demographers have calculated that the Amish population will exceed 1 million by the year 2050.

Because of this growth, images of the Amish as a "people of place," tied to the land of their ancestors, need to be revised. According to data compiled by Joseph F. Donnermeyer, a sociologist at Ohio State University, the Amish established 278 new settlements between 1990 and 2009, locating in 170 new counties, where no Amish had previously lived. Today, more than half of all Amish settlements are less than two decades old.

What are we to make of this, and why is it relevant to the global church? First of all, the demographic transformation underway within the Amish church is a welcome reminder that church growth in North America is indeed possible—the dynamic expansion in membership that we associate with churches in the Global South can also happen in our own backyard.

Second, we should resist the inevitable impulse to dismiss this growth as "merely" a function of large families—what some Mennonites have derisively called "bedroom evangelism." The first and most crucial missionary calling of any Christian congregation is to communicate its convictions in a compelling way to those closest at hand. Indeed, if our own children are not attracted to our faith and life, we have good reason to ask whether we have anything relevant to say to people in mission contexts far from home. The Amish young adults I know are not robots who have been programmed to mindlessly obey the church. They recognize that baptism implies a choice that will shape the rest of their lives. Having considered the options, they choose to stay.

Third, the Amish serve as a healthy reminder that Anabaptist convictions have always found expression in a wide variety of cultural forms. Their visible presence should caution us against insisting that North American Mennonites represent the "norm" for what it means to be part of this rich tradition. As we increasingly engage with other Anabaptist-Mennonite groups around the world whose practices may look different from our own, we should keep in mind the variety of expressions that also exist closer to home.

Finally, the strong communal identity embodied by the Amish does not necessarily imply a provincialism or lack of interest in other groups within the Anabaptist-Mennonite family of faith. Recently, I was warmly welcomed at a two-day gathering of Amish historians meeting at a new settlement in Maysville, Ky. Participants expressed great interest in the regional variety evident within their own groups while also inquiring into contemporary Mennonite faith and practice. For more than a decade, U.S. Amish communities have been quietly supporting Old Colony Mennonites in Chihuahua, Mexico, with school teachers capable of instruction in High German, technical assistance in dairy farming and expertise in cheese production. And the "Haiti Auctions" held annually in several of the largest Amish communities have raised millions of dollars in response to human needs far from home.

The Old Order Amish are members of the global Anabaptist family. Their presence enriches all of us; and their remarkable growth should inspire appreciation. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Today, more than half of all Amish settlements are less than two decades old.

A scientist's experience of heaven

While many see compatibilities between science and religion, many others see conflict. An Oct. 15 article in *Newsweek*, "My Proof of Heaven" by Eben Alexander, tries to bridge that conflict in a dramatic way.

Alexander is a neurosurgeon who has taught at Harvard Medical School and other universities. He tells of an experience he had four years ago when he awoke with an intense headache. "Within hours," he writes, "my entire cortex—the part of the brain that controls thought and emotion and that in essence makes us human—had shut down." Doctors at the local hospital determined that he had contracted a rare bacterial meningitis that had penetrated his cerebrospinal fluid, and the bacteria were eating his brain.

For seven days he lay in a deep coma, and his higher-order brain functions were totally offline. Then, as his doctors weighed whether or not to discontinue treatment, his eyes popped open.

Alexander writes about his experience as a scientist because he knows how stories like his sound to skeptics. He notes that while he considered himself a Christian before this happened, it was "more in name than in actual belief."

But his experience changed that. He writes: "There is no scientific explanation for the fact that while my body lay in coma, my mind—my conscious, inner self—was alive and well." He describes "a larger dimension of the universe: a dimension I'd never dreamed existed and which the old, precoma me would have been more than happy to explain was a simple impossibility."

Alexander is not the first to describe such an experience, but he is one of the few who does so as a scientist, and a neurosurgeon at that. And, as far as he knows, no one before him ever traveled to this dimension "(a) while their cortex was completely shut down, and (b) while their body was under minute medical observation."

This is important because the chief arguments against near-death experiences "suggest that these experiences are the results of minimal, transient or partial malfunctioning of the cortex."

His cortex wasn't malfunctioning; it wasn't even functioning. "According to current medical understanding of the brain and mind," Alexander writes, "there is absolutely no way that I could have experienced even a dim and limited consciousness during my time in the coma, much less the hyper-vivid and completely coherent odyssey I underwent."

He goes on to describe his experience, with frequent disclaimers about language not being able to adequately capture what happened.

The message that "went through [him] like a wind" had three parts. He summarizes them thus:

"You are loved and cherished, dearly, forever."

"You have nothing to fear."

"There is nothing you can do wrong."

Regardless of Alexander's science credentials, most nonbelievers, I imagine, will simply deny the truthfulness of his experience, believing (yes, having faith) that some nondivine explanation will eventually emerge.

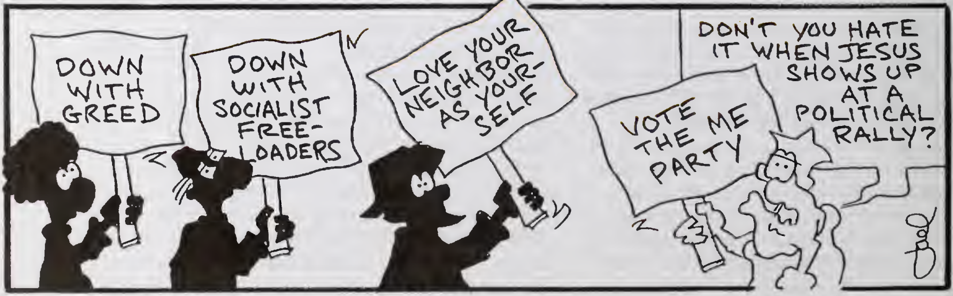
Many Christians, I imagine, will also deny his message because it's too inclusive. It lets people off the hook. It doesn't punish evildoers.

Alexander writes that the universe he experienced in his coma is "the same one that both Einstein and Jesus were speaking of in their (very) different ways."

I've read (and heard) other accounts like Alexander's, and each time I feel encouraged. But I also know it comes down to belief. While science feeds our knowledge, what we decide about the universe and our place in it comes down to faith.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


DOWN WITH GREED
DOWN WITH SOCIALIST FREE-LOADERS
LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF
VOTE THE ME PARTY
DON'T YOU HATE IT WHEN JESUS SHOWS UP AT A POLITICAL RALLY?

© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> "When violence and guns destroy the character and moral fiber of our nation, it is of infinite importance that the faith community boldly refutes the nonsensical messages of the Gun Empire, which proclaim, 'guns do not kill' and 'the answer to gun violence is more guns.'"—James E. Atwood in *America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé*

Grammarphobia

Managers are fighting an epidemic of grammar gaffes in the workplace, writes Sue Shellenberger in The Wall Street Journal. Many of them attribute slipping skills to the informality of email, texting and Twitter, where slang and shortcuts are common. Such looseness with language can create bad impressions with clients, ruin marketing materials and cause communications errors, many managers say. In a survey earlier this year, about 45 percent of 430 employers said they were increasing employee-training programs to improve employees' grammar and other skills.—*The Marketplace*

Mental illness in Scripture

A sample sermon issued by the Church of England to tackle the stigma of mental illness suggests that some biblical characters could be diagnosed as having had mental disease. King Saul's mood swings might have been signs of bipolar disorder. St. Paul's Damascus road experience could have involved some sort of breakdown or psychotic episode. And the New Testament suggests that Jesus' own family suspected that he was losing his mind. People who find these suggestions offensive should consider this question: Do we mistakenly believe that God cannot or will not work through people with mental illness?
—*Christian Century*

50%
of Australia's Great Barrier Reef has vanished in the past 30 years, partly because of higher ocean temperatures.—*Time*

Losing our religion

The number of Americans who say they have no religious affiliation has hit an all-time high—about one in five American adults—according to a new study released Oct. 9 by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Labeled "nones" because they claim either no religious preference or no religion at all, their ranks have hit 46 million people. Much of the growth is among young people—one in three U.S. adults under 30 are now considered nones.—*Religion News Service*

Numbers to ponder

- Percentage of articles in *The New Yorker* with a woman's byline in 2011: **26.44**
- Percentage of women graduates from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 2012: **60**
- Calories in one large baked potato: **278**
- Calories in that same potato made into chips: **360**
- Number of pounds lost in one year by cutting 100 calories a day: **5**
- Percentage of potato crop consumed by Americans in processed forms: **72**

—*Yes! Magazine*

Affordable care action

Russell Dohner, 87, has been practicing medicine in the small town of Rushville, Ill., for nearly 60 years. He refuses to quit, even though he is stooped and increasingly frail. And he still charges just $5 for each visit—or nothing at all if patients can't afford that meager amount. People remember his kindnesses. One woman recalls how Dohner came to her house and sat by her sister's crib all night when she suffered from seizures. Dohner's nurse is 85, and his receptionist is 84.—*Christian Century*

Monthly active Twitter users: **140 million**
Tweets sent per day: **340 million**
Price range to buy 1,000 Twitter followers: **$10-$17**
To buy 50,000 Twitter followers: **$280-$497**
—*Columbia Journalism Review*

10 unhappiest jobs in America

1. Security officer
2. Registered nurse
3. Teacher
4. Sales engineer
5. Product manager
6. Program manager
7. Marketing manager
8. Director of sales
9. Marketing director
10. Maintenance supervisor

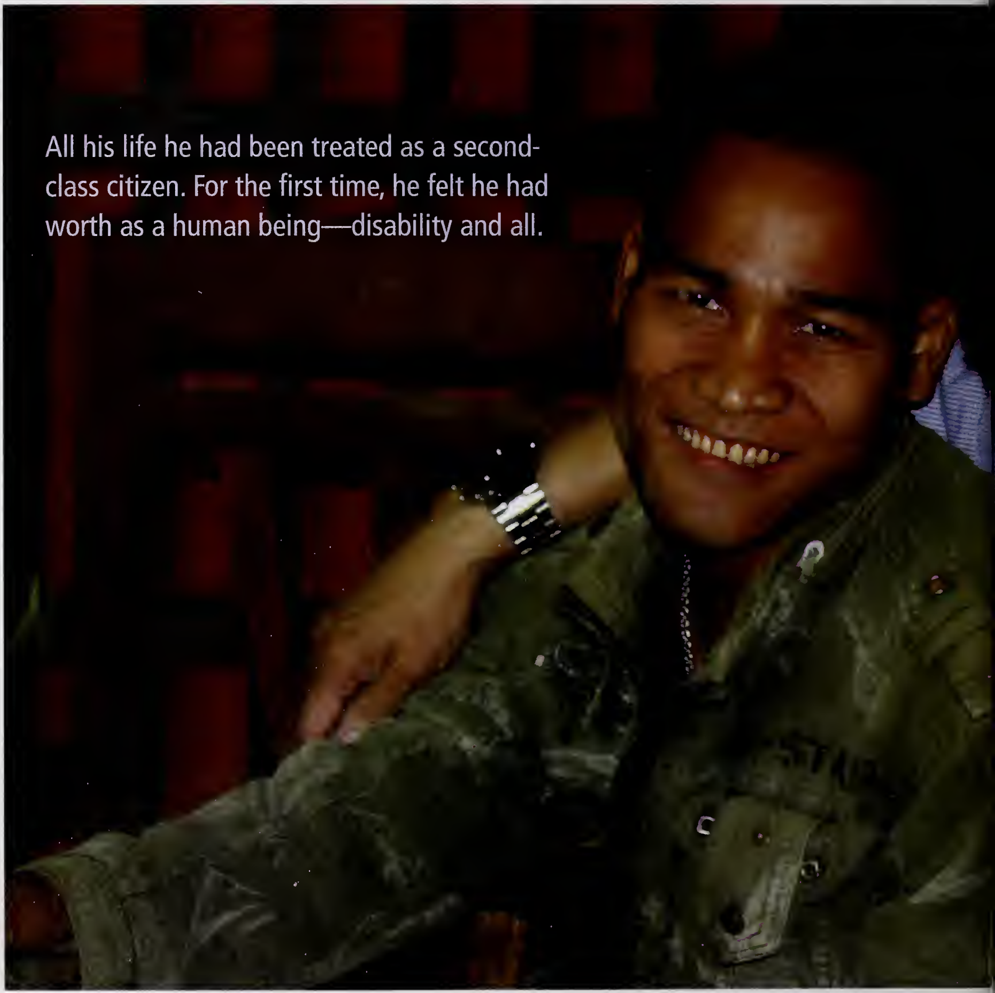
Source: CareerBliss and Bureau of Labor Statistics

LAOS
Hanoi
Chiang Mai
Vientiane
Vinh
THAILAND
Da Nang
Bangkok
Buon Ma

Kingdom shoes

God didn't heal Kuaying Teng's leg but used it.

by Ariel Ropp



All his life he had been treated as a second-class citizen. For the first time, he felt he had worth as a human being—disability and all.

Teng, a Laos native and the director of Asian ministries for Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network, met Teep at a bus station four years ago while traveling for work. The two became fast friends, and Teng has counted on Teep and his three-wheeled rickshaw for transportation ever since. A strong believer in "relationships first," Teng intentionally maintains the friendship and uses the trips as an opportunity to share his faith story with Teep, who has since become a Christian and started his own church in Laos.

As director of Asian ministries, Teng travels to Asia several times a year to assist with church plants, encourage Mennonite leaders, promote peace and build relationships—including ones with people he meets on the street, like Teep. A natural evangelist, Teng feels comfortable engaging people from all walks of life and sharing his personal testimony, a story of healing and hope.

"Church work and ministry are my passion, even when I'm asleep," Teng says. "It's not just work. I consider it a calling. My calling is my life."

When Kuaying Teng travels in Laos, he knows exactly who to call—a tuk-tuk driver known simply as Teep.

Kuaying Teng (right) poses with Sunai, a Myanmar man with polio. After Teng met Sunai at a Bible Missionary Church gathering, Teng gave him $100 to start a chicken farm to help provide for Sunai's family.

Photo provided

Humble beginnings

As a boy, Teng never dreamed he would one day work for the church. Having contracted polio in his left leg at 7 months old, he spent most of his childhood convinced he would be a beggar. Growing up in Laos during the 1960s, Teng lived in a place where people with disabilities were viewed as sinners and often left to beg on the streets.

Fortunately, Teng's father, a Chinese businessman, was able to save enough money to send him to a rehabilitation center for treatment and schooling. Still, this arrangement meant living away from his parents and nine siblings for the first 10 years of his life.

"I felt like an orphan," Teng says.

Once he could walk, Teng was allowed to return home and enroll at a new school, where he excelled at math and foreign languages (he now speaks six). At age 16, he moved by himself to Thailand to work as a translator and to make orthopedic shoes for patients at a refugee camp with Handicap International, an organization that aided handicapped victims of the Laotian Civil War. Lasting from 1953 to 1975, the civil war was a

Kuaying Teng Photo provided

central battleground in the Vietnam War and resulted in hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths and injuries. Teng, and later his family, were among thousands who fled to Thailand during this violent period.

The village leaders were so impressed by the woman's recovery that they encouraged their people to attend Teng's church, which grew from four families to hundreds of weekly attendees.

It was in Thailand that a classmate invited Teng to church and introduced him to Jesus for the first time. A self-taught guitarist and keyboardist, Teng could play popular rock music by Santana and the Bee Gees and quickly became the leader of their church worship band. For more than a year, Teng jammed with the band but gave little thought to the meaning behind the music.

Then one day, an American missionary visited the church and shared John 9, the story of Jesus and the blind man. That message changed Teng's life.

In this passage, Jesus' disciples ask why the man was born blind: Did he or his parents sin? Jesus responds that the man was not blind because he had sinned but so God would be glorified through the man's healing.

This story moved Teng. All his life he had been treated as a second-class citizen. For the first time, he felt he had worth as a human being—disability and all. Teng decided then and there he needed to learn more about Jesus. A few months later, he was baptized and began to feel called to mission work.

"I thought to myself, how many people in the world have disabilities? I knew it was time for me to … take the gospel message to them so they would know that Jesus loves them and values them just as they are," Teng says.

Teng's mother was not pleased with his decision to convert. A Buddhist nun from Vietnam, she found his Bible and asked him to move out of their one-room house in Thailand. Homeless, Teng stayed in the church building until he was able to enroll in Bible school in the capital city of Bangkok. There he taught Sunday school and eventually became the church's pastor, a job he never expected he could do.

"I knew I could work with the handicapped people—that's my passion—but I learned God can use me with physically healthy people, too," Teng says. "When we say 'handicap,' I include spiritual handicaps, too. We all need Christ's love and healing."

From refugee camp to Canada

Teng later returned to a Thai refugee camp as a Mennonite Central Committee translator and started a small church plant. One night, a group of village leaders at the camp asked him to help a woman believed to be possessed by spirits. Teng came to the woman and prayed for her while she ran frantically around her house. After 20 minutes, the woman suddenly stopped, looked at him with bloodshot eyes and quietly lay down. A profound peace came over the room.

The village leaders were so impressed by the woman's swift recovery that they encouraged their people to attend Teng's church, which quickly grew from four families to hundreds of weekly attendees. The small room where he held services became so crowded that people would sit on trees outside to hear his sermons. Teng was only 22 years old at the time.

Mennonite Central Committee eventually invited Teng to Canada to attend Bible school and become a pastor. Though he had never heard of Mennonites, he was immediately attracted to An-

Even though God did not heal my leg, he used it for his purposes so I could use it to travel the world and preach the gospel.—Kuaying Teng

abaptist thought. A Chinese Buddhist, Teng's father had taught him to avoid violence whenever possible, even if it meant emigrating in times of political disturbance. Teng vividly recalls his father telling him as a boy, "If you meet a tiger in the jungle, what do you do? Don't fight. Don't run. Pray." Growing up in this context made it easier for Teng to join the Mennonite church.

Over the next few years, Teng completed his studies at Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference's Aylmer (Ontario) Bible School and was installed as pastor at Lao Christian Fellowship of St. Catharines, Ontario. He was ordained in 1994. Four years later, he accepted a position as director of Asian resource ministries at the Commission on Home Ministries, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network. Teng and Khampha, his wife, continue to attend Lao Christian Fellowship. They have four grown children.

Current ministry

The mission of Teng's ministry is twofold: first, to strengthen relationships between Asian Mennonite churches in North America and the wider denomination (Mennonite Church USA), and second, to promote reconciliation, healing and peace between Asians in North America and their home countries.

To sustain Asian immigrant churches in the United States—38 total—Teng meets with congregations and conference leaders, listens to their stories and communicates their needs to Mennonite Church USA. This can be challenging due to cultural and language barriers. He works to provide resources to these churches by offering, for example, peace education and Mennonite materials translated into Asian languages.

His second goal is to connect immigrant churches with church plants in their native countries—primarily Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos—where he visits three times a year to teach Anabaptist theology and offer consultation on cross-cultural transformation. He often invites North American immigrants to join him on his trips to foster networking and unity between the two groups, as painful memories from the war still linger.

"First-generation Lao remember the war, but those people who were born in Canada and the United States didn't experience what happened," Teng says. "My hope for the next [second] generation is that they learn the history, pick up the broken pieces and assemble them together again."

Teng's latest challenge has been to formalize the peacemaking process between Laotians. On May 19, he met with top Lao government officials to propose Laos Peace Community, a new organization that will allow Laotian Mennonites in the United States and Canada to minister in their country of origin. The group will engage in social service and peacebuilding activities in war-torn Laos once the government formally approves the initiative.

In Laos, Teng also visited the Xiangkhuang province, where undetonated ammunition from the Vietnam War continues to explode and kill hundreds of people each year. There, he visited victims in the hospital and shared his faith with children and others he met on the street.

"Teng is an inveterate friend-maker and a born evangelist," says John Lapp, director of International Ministries at Mennonite Mission Network and Teng's occasional travel partner. "He is a stranger to no one, especially anyone that he identifies as being from Southeast Asia. He wants to visit all the churches he can find and share the good news of God's kingdom with everyone he meets."

That good news is inextricably linked to Teng's personal experience of healing. Teng realized long ago that he could use his disability as a way to connect with people and spread the word about Jesus, something he continues to do today. When people stare at his leg and the custom-made, four-inch tall shoe he wears on his left foot, he uses it as a conversation starter, then shares his personal testimony and the story of John 9. Over the years he has spoken with hundreds of people around the world, forming relationships and bringing his message of hope.

"Even though God did not heal my leg, he used it for his purposes so I could use it to travel the world and preach the gospel," Teng says.

Ariel Ropp, Schaumburg, Ill., is a senior at Goshen (Ind.) College studying communication and psychology. She completed an internship in the Mission Network marketing and communication department this summer as part of the Service Inquiry Program.

ECUADOR
Quito
Guayaquil

A church welcomes refugees

Colombians, forced from their homes and farms, find refuge in Ecuador.

by David Shenk

Refugees from Colombia enjoy a community lunch at Quito Mennonite Church during a workshop put on by the refugee project. Photo by David Shenk

During the past 10 years, Quito Mennonite, a church founded by Ecuador Partnership, including the Colombia Mennonite Church and Central Plains Conference along with Mennonite Mission Network in 2001, has opened its doors to many refugees and walked alongside them in their struggles. ▶

In my Mennonite Mission Network role, assigned to me by the church, I try to figure out how to help meet these refugees' extreme needs.

I arrive by bike at Quito Mennonite Church at 9 a.m. on a Tuesday morning in August, and there are already two Colombian refugee families waiting at the door to talk with me. I welcome them inside and head up to my office with one of the families while the other waits its turn downstairs in our makeshift waiting room in the sanctuary.

I talk with the first family, jotting down notes about their situation: "Family of 12, arrived in Ecuador two months ago, have been staying in a homeless shelter since they arrived, came only with a few pairs of clothes, their son was assassinated in Colombia, all are unemployed, have been denied the refugee visa."

The second interview follows, and I scribble down these notes: "Elderly couple, unemployed, live alone, behind on rent payments, sleep on bare wooden floor, were farmers in Colombia, had farm taken away by guerrillas, suffering from hunger."

A third man arrives and shares his story: "Man whose wife and 3-year-old child are still in Colombia, former cocaine trafficker since age 13, actively being persecuted in Quito for deciding to leave his job as a drug trafficker, lives in constant fear, has aspirations to move to Brazil to escape persecution."

It's now 10:45 a.m., and five more refugee families are waiting downstairs. During the next three hours, I interview the five families, scribbling down the following notes: "Single mother of four small children, unemployed and suffering from serious medical problems; family of four, children suffering severe discrimination and abuse in school from other students for being Colombian; family of three, father needs medical attention, has various bullets lodged in his body; family of five, father worked for a month and employer refused to pay what he owed; single father of two daughters, suffering from malnutrition, live in damp apartment with leaks in the roof."

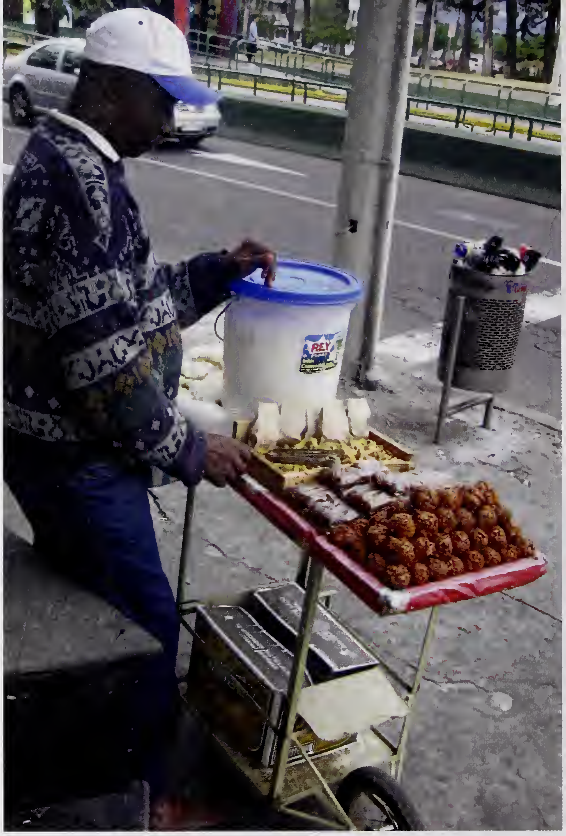
At 1:45 p.m., I leave my office emotionally exhausted and in search of lunch. I eat my meal in silence and reflect over the eight intense interviews I had over the course of the morning. I can't help but be thankful yet feel guilty about the delicious food on my plate—a luxury that most of the families I work with don't enjoy. There are no easy answers or solutions. And tomorrow there will be eight more families waiting to speak with me who will also be desperately seeking solutions to their difficult problems. And next week there will be more families. And the week after that. All the families have in some way been victims of the vicious and complex war in Colombia that continues to kill, destroy and displace.

Approximately 1,500 men, women and children cross the border from Colombia to Ecuador each month seeking an escape from the violence and threats.

Stretching over several decades, the armed conflict in Colombia demonstrates the complexities of a war that combines drug trafficking, land struggles, government corruption, leftist armed guerrilla groups, right-wing paramilitaries, local criminal gangs, the Colombian military and foreign investment in natural resources and militarization. The war has led to kidnappings, hired killings, torture, massacres and extortion, resulting in 5 million internally displaced Colombians—many of whom are small farmers— and hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled Colombia.

The families that arrive at our church are among the approximately 1,500 men, women and children that cross the border from Colombia to Ecuador each month seeking an escape from the

David Shenk participates in worship at Quito Mennonite Church.
Photo by Craig Welscott



Pedro, a Colombian refugee living in Ecuador, received a $75 grant from Quito Mennonite Church to start a coconut juice stand.

Photo by David Shenk

violence and threats. Now in Ecuador, they form part of a vulnerable refugee population that suffers from a wide variety of severe issues.

In today's world, a powerful current dictated by materialism, consumerism and individualism flows relentlessly, allowing a handful of privileged individuals to navigate a river of wealth and power, while others, including refugees, gasp for air and struggle for equality, dignity and survival. Quito Mennonite Church, through its work with refugees, is putting into action a proposal that questions our society's priorities and indifference toward those who are drowning in the raging river of inequality. It's a proposal based on loving one's neighbor and treating every human being with respect and dignity, especially those who are suffering in a foreign land.

The project has expanded, now providing food assistance to nearly 40 families per month. So far this year, the project has provided 18 families with a $75 grant, which allows them to invest in work materials and generate their own income.

I'm regularly energized by hearing positive feedback from refugees and seeing constructive change in the lives of those we are privileged to accompany.—David Shenk

Through an agreement with a local private hospital, refugees with serious medical issues can access excellent health care at a low cost.

Refugees can also begin to overcome psychological trauma free of charge through weekly appointments with a professional psychologist at the Mennonite church. Monthly workshops are also organized in order to create community support networks among refugees and to inform them about the resources and opportunities available in Ecuador. Through relationships with other partner organizations in Quito, we are also able to refer refugees to organizations that can assist them in other areas, such as legal advice and education.

Despite humbly realizing each day that our efforts simply cannot meet the enormous need of the large refugee population in Quito, I'm regularly energized by hearing positive feedback from refugees and seeing constructive change in the lives of those we are privileged to accompany.

One day, while walking on the street in downtown Quito, I ran into Pedro, a man we had helped with a $75 business grant a few months earlier. He was strolling along the sidewalk selling coconut juice and coconut-flavored candies. When our eyes met, we both smiled. He hugged me and offered me a complimentary cup of coconut juice. Although the concept of progress and success is relative, the sight of Pedro on the street with his small, red cart of coconut products meant progress. It meant that his business plan was working. It meant that he was no longer unemployed. It meant that he wasn't suffering from hunger. It meant that he could pay rent. It meant a taste of success.

David Shenk, a Mennonite Mission Network worker from Harrisonburg, Va., is serving a three-year term in Quito.

Two-way learning

A school's Youth Venture team and a Hispanic congregation learn from each other.

by Melanie Hess

Peace & Justice Academy 10th-grader Casey Gibson weaves magic with lanyard strands at the day care center. Photo by Randy Christopher

On a hot summer day in Brownsville, Texas, the Hernandez family home overflowed. Children filled every bit of open space—outdoor areas, the living room, dining room and hallways—as youth from California and Texas guided them in Spanish and English.

For the Texas youth, the scene was familiar. Their church, Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria, hosts the day care every summer for undocumented workers who can't afford it. For the Californians—a Youth Venture group from the Peace and Justice Academy in Pasadena—it was a new, eye-opening adventure.

While the school has done a good job at focusing on empathy for marginalized people and asking questions about justice, the students hadn't yet engaged in service.

The experience began when Jill Schmidt, a Mennonite Mission Network recruiter, walked into the Peace and Justice Academy, a Mennonite Education Agency-affiliated school of about 25 students, hoping to find a student or two to join a Youth Venture team. Instead, she ended up initiating what both Mission Network and the Academy hope will be an ongoing relationship.

Youth Venture is a Mennonite Mission Network service program that invites high school students to spend two weeks serving and learning in a different context or country at the invitation of their hosts. Teams are usually made up of individuals from around the United States. But Randy Christopher, the school's principal and social studies teacher, had a different idea.

"I thought, We need to put together a school group to go out and serve," Christopher says. "That would both provide service and build our school culture and community."

The Peace and Justice Academy prides itself on being active and working for social justice, especially in its home community. Christopher says that while they've done a good job at focusing on empathy for marginalized people and asking questions about justice, they hadn't yet engaged in service.

So the school put together a team of five students for a Youth Venture team. Meanwhile, in Brownsville, Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria had requested a team to help them carry out their annual summer day care. And so Christopher and the kids from the Peace and Justice Academy found themselves in a van headed east in mid-June.

Arloa Bontrager, Youth Venture's director, was thrilled to make the match.

"When I visited Brownsville last fall, I got a real sense of their passion for welcoming the stranger into their midst, and for their desire to share their love of their community with a Youth Venture team," she says.

After arriving in Brownsville, the team got to work. They were welcomed with open arms by the people of Rey de Gloria and began assisting at the day care: working with kids on craft projects, playing chess and practicing their Spanish. They also led Bible studies for the kids together with people from their host church.

"Our ministry is geared toward working with the poor, mostly undocumented persons," says Lupe Aguilar, the pastor at Rey de Gloria. "We have a free summer day care every year and we try to host as many kids belonging to undocumented families as possible, simply because they can't afford day care."

The church chose to serve from within the local community, rather than from the church building, so the day care is housed in the four-bedroom home of the Hernandez family, one of the families from the congregation.

The Hernandez home was also where the Youth Venture team slept. In the interest of hospitality and providing beds for the team, the two youngest Hernandez children moved into their parents' bedroom, another son went to stay with his grandparents, while another slept in the living room in a sleeping bag.

"This was the sort of sacrifice we saw from the community to make us comfortable," Christopher says. "It wasn't obvious at any given moment who was serving whom."

Pastor Lupe said that hospitality and a strong sense of family are two things his community has to offer those who come to serve with them.

"They get to learn about our Hispanic culture," he says. "They see the way we act toward our parents and kids, our foods, our hospitality. And some Mennonite kids don't even know there is a Hispanic Mennonite church or that we do worship in a different way."

And, Aguilar adds, the kids from Rey de Gloria also learned something from their visitors.

"Our kids saw how these other Christian kids were also willing to bend over backward to be friendly," he says. "We saw so much similarity, even though we come from different cultures. By the end, our kids were saying, 'They're just like us—but with blue eyes, of course.' "

In addition to connecting with the community, Christopher, because he's a social studies teacher, took advantage of some on-the-ground teaching opportunities. After studying the Mexican-American War during the school year, students on the Youth Venture team got to visit Palo Alto, one of the war's early battlefields.

They also tackled some immigration questions with a visit to the border fence that separates Texas and Mexico. (Brownsville is a border town.)

"Even though we're from southern California, we'd never gone to the border," says Christopher. "We'd engaged questions around immigration, but on our way from Pasadena to Brownsville, we got stopped three times by the Border Patrol."

Christopher says that experience, complete with armed officials and drug-sniffing dogs, led to discussions about what it would mean to be an undocumented worker and have to avoid authorities.

"The local Hispanic community took us in like we were family," says Ethan Christopher, one of the students from the Academy, "so it was intimidating to stand by the wall put up to keep other Hispanic people out of the country—like they were somehow dangerous or inferior."

Isabella Gomez, a young woman who lives in Brownsville and served last summer with Youth Venture in Los Angeles, was glad to have a Youth Venture team come to her town. In 2011, she'd done some work at the Peace and Justice Academy during her Youth Venture term and took it upon herself to invite the Brownsville team to her house. Then, even though she doesn't attend Rey de Gloria, she came to work with them at the day care.

Christopher says a similar thing happened when his team returned to Los Angeles.

"A week after we got back, the L.A. Youth Venture team came to paint at the Academy," he says, "so our team all came out and helped them. We all wore our Youth Venture shirts, and there was a real feeling of sister- and brotherhood."

Why shouldn't every Mennonite Education Agency school send out summer teams with a Mennonite service program?
—Randy Christopher

Upon their return to Los Angeles, the team was already talking about whether they should go back next year. Christopher hopes that as the school grows, the number of Youth Venture teams they send out each summer can also grow.

He also believes that this experience is a model for other Mennonite schools.

"Why shouldn't every Mennonite Education Agency school send out summer teams with a Mennonite service program?" he asks.

After a positive experience of welcoming the Youth Venture team and sharing their beliefs and culture, Pastor Aguilar says the young people from his church were also asking questions about how they could serve in other places.

"Our kids are hoping to do something similar in the future," he says. "They were saying, 'We need to get out of here; we need to go to other congregations.' "

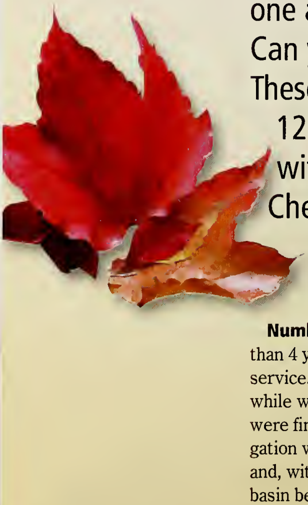
Melanie Hess, Lancaster, Pa., is a writer for Mennonite Mission Network.

12 signs of the kingdom ...

... at a clumsy congregation

by Tobin Miller Shearer

Can the kingdom that is not yet already be? Can you give someone a gift that they already have? Can you juggle if you're clumsy? These three questions speak to 12 signs of the kingdom I have witnessed in this congregation, Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.



Number 1. When our son Zachary was no more than 4 years old, we attended a Maundy evening service. He and his brother Dylan watched carefully while we men washed each other's feet. When we were finished, Nevin Horst, a patriarch of the congregation who has now passed away, came up to Zachary and, without saying anything at all, placed a towel and basin beneath where Zachary sat. Zachary had taken his shoes off when I had and was waiting patiently for his turn despite my having told him that only big people got to do this. Nevin cradled Zachary's tender feet in his craggy hands and gently dripped water to make them clean.

Number 2. For weeks prior to our departure for graduate school in Chicago, I was not sleeping well. I worried constantly about all that could go wrong before we left. Although at that point I had not publicly

Jen Shenk | 2012 TM Photo Contest Entrant

discussed my insomnia, John Becker, a member of the older men's Sunday school class that I had once helped teach, came up to me after church and asked how I was doing. When I responded, "Moves are hard," John did two things. First, he said, "There is nowhere you can go where God is not there with you." Then he gently rubbed my shoulder. For perhaps no more than a minute—maybe even only 30 seconds—John was Christ to me. In the back of the church, behind the last pew, enveloped by the fluttering buzz of post-worship conversation, John put on the skin of Jesus and helped me limp my way to wellness.

Nevin cradled Zachary's tender feet in his craggy hands and gently dripped water to make them clean.

Number 3. During a Mennonite Youth Fellowship lock-in after kick-the-can in the sanctuary, arm wrestling in the fellowship hall and ingesting large quantities of junk food, one of our wonderfully rowdy youth told me that my widow's peak looked like a peninsula jutting out into a whalebone sea. He may not have actually said "whalebone sea," but I do think he called my widow's peak a peninsula. I count his banter as a sign of the kingdom because it happened at church. Despite a thousand adolescent options, our youth have consistently said this is a place they want to be. Here, church is built of rough-and-tumble four-square games, 3-D Dorito chips and teasing ever more balding advisers.

Number 4. On the day before an open house our congregation held to celebrate the construction of a new narthex, I came inside to find one of the wise men of our congregation cleaning windows. I asked him why he washed. He said, "I want the new addition to look especially nice for our visitors." In typically unassuming style, he shrugged his shoulders, wished me well and continued carefully cleaning each pane.

Number 5. Every Sunday that our church's best accordion player shares her gift up front, the music makes me glad, and if you look closely at her face while she plays with a mandolin beside her, you can see her eyes already dancing.

Number 6. For long months we received reports from the hospital about one member's wound that would not heal. During those many days, our brother held his faith before us. Even when there seemed no rational reason to do so, in the midst of trouble that left him tired, he showed us a way to cling tenaciously to faith.

Number 7. Every Monday night, our family enjoys taking part in the community gatherings where those in need of a meal can join us for dinner. At those gatherings, two teenage members of this church go through the line. Having participated as both meal provider and recipient, I think the more difficult task is going through the line. For those of us who are white and Mennonite, being served is not easy. I always want the servers to know that I don't really have to be here unlike the "others" in the line. And so when I see these two young men having animated conversation as they sit down to eat, I am humbled and impressed.

The kingdom breaks through in acts as improbable and unstable as juggling by clumsy people.

Number 8. I also see the kingdom when we pound pew backs in time to the songs. Even though it is one of too few ways we bring our bodies into worship, that we pound on the benches like 100 wooden drums never fails to move me.

Number 9. We don't mind that the pastor's wife wears fancy flip-flops in the sanctuary. I even see us moving toward a place where we ever more fully embrace all wearers of flip-flops and three-piece suits and overalls and evening dresses.

Number 10. Several years ago, I approached two other members about their van's license plate. The plate included an image of the Cleveland baseball team mascot. I asked if they would be open to talking about the image. They said yes. I shared how such images ridiculed Native Americans. I referred to my Native American friends who find the image damaging to their children. They in turn shared of their love of baseball, their long-time support of the Cleveland team and that they did not intend to damage anyone by rooting for their team. Yet, even though they did not agree with my assessment, they wrote in a caring letter that they had decided to remove the license plate.

Number 11. While helping with child care one Saturday evening, one of the youngest members of our church family and I read a colorful book about cars. As I pointed to each vehicle in a crowded traffic scene, this young boy accurately identified the year, make and model of each vehicle. Not long into our conversation, I said to him, "How do you know all these cars?" After a moment of pondering, he replied, "Tobin, I was made to do this." Silently I nodded and pondered the Divine. How does God craft the meeting of a 6-year-old boy and a 37-year-old man? Did he know I desperately needed to hear that God gives purpose to us all? Had God whispered in his ear? Days later, I continued resting easy because my young brother, through his gift of bedrock knowing what he was created to do, convinced me God will also show me my purpose in good time.

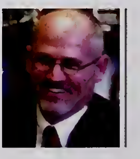
I began with three questions. First, can the kingdom that is not yet already be? Yes and no. Theologian William Stringfellow reminded us that we will never find the kingdom fully present. Just when we think we have found a way to make it happen, it will disappear. His point, I think, is that we cannot, by our efforts in the midst of a fallen world, create perfection. All we can do is look for the signs, celebrate them as gifts and remain open to the many forms they can take when we place ourselves outside predictable, rational space. In these 11 signs with one yet to come, I see evidence of the kingdom that is not yet already here.

Can you give someone a gift they already have? Yes, I believe you can. Every one of these signs are already present. I hope I have given them afresh so that they may be remembered anew.

Can you juggle if you're clumsy? Yes because flawed people marked these signs. The kingdom breaks through in acts as improbable and unstable as juggling by clumsy people, people who have simply allowed themselves to be shaped by the Spirit in that moment, at that time. No more. No less. Born of the members of a clumsy congregation.

Number 12. On the first day of Lent, Joanne Belcher played the part of Jesus. With dramatic flair she turned away the tempter in the wilderness and called us all to worship. In the memory of Joanne's portrayal of Jesus, I see a sign of the kingdom because this congregation did not make a fuss that Joanne was a woman bringing the person of Jesus to us in worship. At the time we had no way of knowing that Joanne would die so suddenly. All we knew is that she gave us a gift that day by showing Jesus' power in the face of human temptation. We accepted her gift without asking her not to be a woman at the moment of the portrayal. Of all these many signs, the image I will take with me more than any other is Joanne Belcher turning away from temptation, calling us all to do the same.

For all these gifts, for all these clumsy jugglers and signs of the kingdom that is not yet, I am grateful.



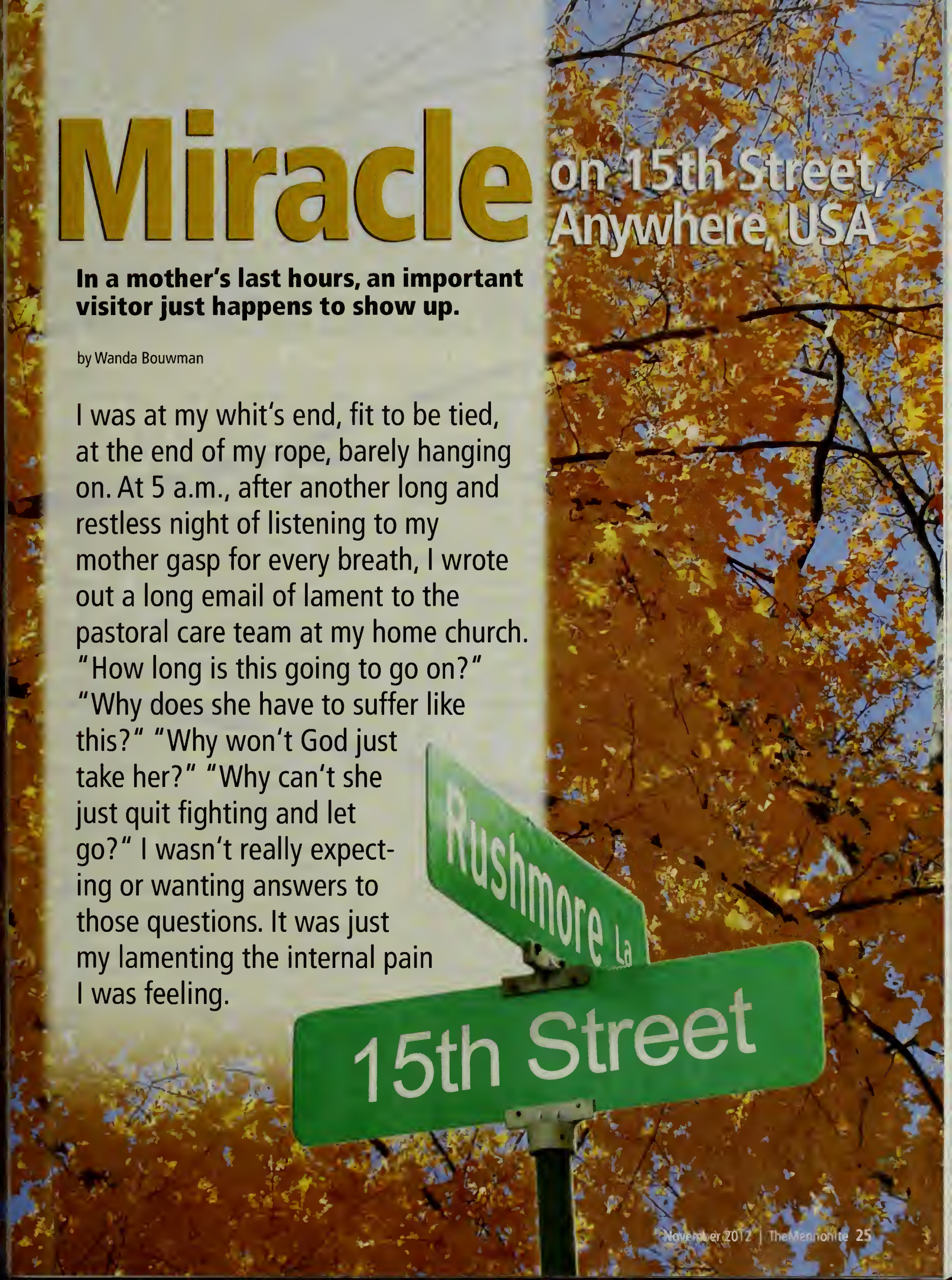
Tobin Miller Shearer lives in Missoula, Mont., where he teaches history at the University of Montana. He continues to hold membership at Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill., and is grateful for the nine years he was a member of East Chestnut St. Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. This is based on a reflection first given in June 2002, a few weeks before leaving East Chestnut Street to attend graduate school in Chicago.

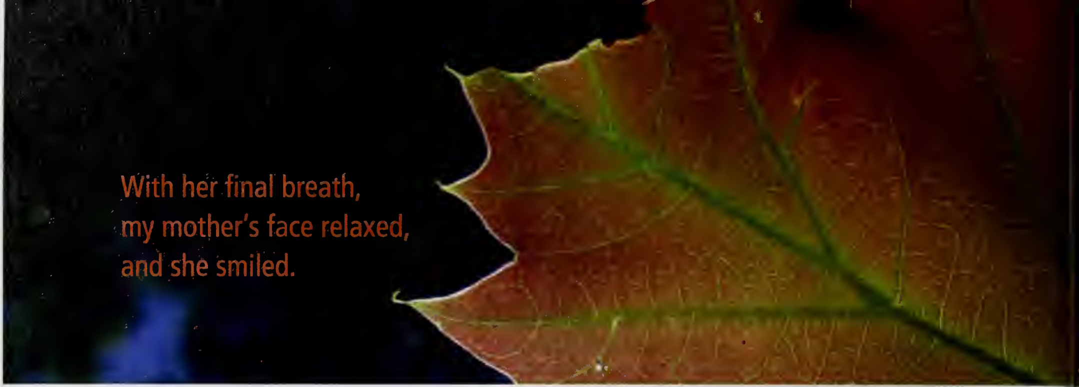
Miracle on 15th Street, Anywhere, USA

In a mother's last hours, an important visitor just happens to show up.

by Wanda Bouwman

I was at my whit's end, fit to be tied, at the end of my rope, barely hanging on. At 5 a.m., after another long and restless night of listening to my mother gasp for every breath, I wrote out a long email of lament to the pastoral care team at my home church. "How long is this going to go on?" "Why does she have to suffer like this?" "Why won't God just take her?" "Why can't she just quit fighting and let go?" I wasn't really expecting or wanting answers to those questions. It was just my lamenting the internal pain I was feeling.





With her final breath, my mother's face relaxed, and she smiled.

It was Wednesday March 21, six days and six long nights into the vigil of my mother's last days here on earth. We never dreamed it would take this long.

When I joined my sister to assess the situation and heard the doctor say, "Nothing we can do. ... It's just a matter of time. ... Putting her on comfort care," we knew it was the end.

We didn't tiptoe through the tulips. We talked openly to Mom about her journey almost being over. We gave her permission to go. "When you are tired of fighting, just let go, go to Jesus, go to the light, go to Dad. He and your son are waiting for you. There are many people here that love you, but there are also many people on the other side that love you, too, and are waiting for you." "There'll be no more sorrow, no more pain, no more tears there."

That was the first and only time she said those three words on her own initiative.

We painted an appealing picture for her. This mantra of saying goodbye was to be repeated over and over again as the days and nights unfolded.

At one point several days later, I touched her left shoulder.

She turned her head toward me with blinded eyes closed, and asked, "Who is it?"

I replied, "It's me, your youngest daughter, the baby of the family."

Next, delivered with much enthusiasm I heard, "I love you."

What a gift she gave to me in those words! That was the first and only time she said those three words on her own initiative without just repeating them back to us after we said them first. I will always remember that sweet declaration she made to me.

The last night seemed to be the longest and the hardest for me. My sister slept pretty well on the recliner, but I just couldn't seem to find the peace I needed to sleep. Friends had stopped by Tuesday night to bring snacks and visit. It helped the time pass, but Mom was restless, and so was I. Her moaning was constant and loud. It tore my heart out. I pleaded with God once again to just take Mom. Why did she have to suffer so much? There was no sense in it, in my mind.

On the sixth day, Wednesday, we decided to get hospice involved. Another friend came later that morning and sat with me. She listened patiently to my story, my lamenting, and it meant the world to me. Later someone came in and told us the hospice nurse would be there at 10:30 to talk to us. I was relieved; finally, maybe someone who could help us.

My friend had left, so I went outside the door of my mom's room to wait for the hospice nurse. I was standing there looking down the long hall toward the nurse's station. Suddenly I saw a person I knew well from a town 15 minutes away walking toward me and carrying a small vase of flowers. My eyes welled up, and I tried to swallow the lump in my throat. Someone must have called her, my mind reasoned. Even though it had been a few years since I'd seen or spoken to her, I knew she had attended seminary and was now a part-time pastor.

"Thank you, God," I breathed. "You knew just who I needed to see today." But no, as I watched her coming down the hall, she suddenly turned right and disappeared into a resident's room. I knew she didn't see me standing there, and for a minute I was confused. I was sure she was coming to see me. At least I need to say hi, I thought.

Sophie Lapp | 2012 TM Photo Contest Entrant

I walked the few steps to the room she went into and saw her talking to a resident there. I stood in the doorway and waved at her until she saw me. She said my name with a big question mark in her voice, and I said, "What are you doing here?" As we met in a warm embrace, I choked out, "My mom is dying. Did someone call you?"

"No" she said, "I was just bringing some flowers to this woman from my church."

She asked where my mom was, and I pointed to the door down the hall.

She said, "I'll be there in a few minutes."

As I walked back to the room, it hit me that I had just witnessed a miracle, but the full impact of what really happened didn't sink in until later. This woman had no idea when she walked into the health-care center that she was going to be used to be my angel.

Within a few minutes she came to Mom's room, where the hospice nurse had also just arrived. As my sister and I sat with the nurse while she explained their program, my angel friend went straight to my mom. She was the perfect person. She wasn't intimidated or repulsed by what she saw there, though most people would be.

I looked over to see my friend holding my mom's hand, talking softly to her, looking intently into her face and moaning some with her. She was at one with my mom and her pain. What a comfort to me that mom was not alone while we were busy with the hospice nurse!

When we had shared our pain and story with the hospice nurse, she said, "This doesn't sound like comfort to me," and went right to work to make mom more comfortable.

As Mom struggled for every raspy, gurgling breath, I pleaded once again for God to take her home. As my sister and I moved to Mom's side, my angel friend slipped to the background at the foot of the bed, out of the way yet a strong presence to me. My sister and I formed a united circle with Mom. We were holding each other, and each had a hand on Mom. That unity was a beautiful thing. We were in this together and were going to see it to the end. Slower and slower, the breaths came, though still noisy and ragged. We were fixated on her, barely breathing ourselves, in tune with her struggle for each last breath.

Finally, what we had been waiting for for the last 144 hours came. With her final breath, my mother's face relaxed, and she smiled. It was a fleeting few seconds, but my sister and I both saw it. Peace flooded Mom's face and the room.

My new definition of peace is the absence of noise. For the first time in many days, my mom was making no noise. The strife was over, the vigil was over, she had arrived. Mom entered heaven on March 21 at 1:01 p.m. For a few minutes no one moved as we took it all in. We were on holy ground. We all embraced.

I thanked my angel friend and marveled at how she had no idea how God was going to use her to minister in such a holy way that day. It hit me that our meeting, my seeing her come down the hall, was the difference of about three seconds. Had I not been outside Mom's room, had I not been looking in exactly the right direction at exactly the right time, she would have never known I was there. And I would not have known that she was just two rooms away.

Coincidence? No way. It was God orchestrated. You can't convince me otherwise. It was my miracle on 15th street, Anywhere, USA.

Wanda Bouwman is a member of Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church.

QUESTIONS TO women leaders

I am more interested in peer-to-peer activities and outreach.
—Cora Brown

Cora Brown is pastor at Church Without Walls in Elkhart, Ind., and executive director of Emerge Ministries, a homeless prevention program. She serves on the board of Mennonite Women USA and the board of the African-American Mennonite Association. She has served as a member of the gifts discernment team of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference and as a board member of Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes.

Do or did you have a woman leader as a mentor?

I have several mentors in Elkhart County. They include pastor Jennifer Tinsley of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, Nancy Rodriguez-Lora of True Vine Tabernacle, and Suella Gerber of Fellowship of Hope Mennonite Church. We talk regularly and pray together. These women help me stay focused and listen to the voice of God. I also have several male pastors who mentor me.

Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?

I mentor a lot of women through my church and Emerge Ministries. Many of them want to be teachers. At least one of them is looking to become a pastor. I meet with them weekly through Bible studies and one-on-one meetings.

How are their experiences the same or different from yours?

Their experiences are totally different from mine. For example, they are more interested in teaching within the church through Sunday school and Bible studies. I am more interested in peer-to-peer activities and outreach.

What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?

I've faced many challenges. For one, not all denominations accept women leaders. That's changing over the years, but it was a significant obstacle in the beginning. Also, while co-pastoring with my husband has its benefits, it also carries challenges for him and me. For example, people may favor one of us over the other. We're working at it slowly. I need to be myself, and he needs to be himself.

When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?

Other pastors, definitely. We have an Elkhart area pastors group in which we support each other. Since God called me to do outreach, I often feel overwhelmed. When I feel stressed and don't know which way to go, they encourage me and offer me the things I need to continue to do the work of God. They send me helpful words and listen to my prayer requests. I am also blessed to have a husband in the ministry who knows when I need a vacation and he willingly provides them.

Blessed are the **peacemakers**

Or, wearing my religion

by Ken Gingerich

OHG089
Blessed are the peacemakers

Photo illustration | Dee Birkey

I put a "Blessed are the Peacemakers" bumper sticker from ThirdWay.com on the back of my Saturn Vue a couple of years ago. It's starting to fade and peel, and I've been thinking about removing it. But it's been there as a daily reminder—to act nice on the road.

I'm a son of a grain-hauling truck driver and learned early on what "good driving" meant. Dad wasn't known for holding his tongue when someone cut him off or, worse, passed his 18-wheeler going down a hill, and then slowed down. The air could get a little blue. We were Mennonite, but farm life and related occupations like hauling grain had its earthy aspects.

Getting to ride in the semi cab was a ritual all the Gingerich boys enjoyed. Having one-on-one time with Dad was always special in the days before OSHA forced him to give up taking passengers along in the truck. We learn by observing, and since temperament is often passed down, I've also been known to use un-Christlike mutterings when I've encountered rudeness on the road. Just ask my wife—and kids. In more recent years I've worked at trying to control my tongue, or at least keep things under my breath, and try to deflate any possible confrontations.

When I put the bumper sticker on my car, I realized I was visibly proclaiming my "ambassadorship" for Jesus. It just would not do to misrepresent him by flipping off the guy who almost forced me off the road. I'm reminded of that every time I walk around and see it stuck to the back of my car. I've had to wonder if that's the role of making a visible statement about what you believe—like wearing plain clothing must be for the Amish and other Mennonite groups. It's a public statement about who you are and whom you represent. It's an outer discipline that helps keep things in check.

This idea of wearing one's religion continues to be part of my personal life. I still have "plain" relatives. My parents started their life together in the Conservative Mennonite Conference. They dressed more plainly until joining the (Old) Mennonite Church when I was a toddler. Mom continued to wear a covering for another 25 years. I remember when she quit wearing it, although she kept one in the glove compartment for "emergencies"—usually an encounter with a more traditional relative or friend. She was not one to offend.

What did the plain clothes my parents wore as young adults represent? A community, a way of being together that was different, for sure. Did it remind them about how they were supposed to act? In some ways, yes—but as I noted, my dad wasn't particularly cautious about what words came out of his mouth. Yet he and Mom modeled a sense of justice and integrity in the ways they treated others that I still try to live up to—along with good driving habits.

I don't wear a broad-brimmed hat or barn-door pants (usually anyway), so a bumper sticker about peacemaking on the back of my car has become a reminder of where I came from and to whom I belong. Some mornings I start counting the cars I allow to cut in front of me on my commute across Albuquerque, N.M., as a practice in patience. I try for a daily minimum of 10. It's also a good reminder that I don't have to get there first. I can be congenial on the road. I don't have to mutter under my breath (although that still happens sometimes).

I do have to confess I recently got caught up in a "contest" with a driver who kept cutting me off. I didn't react in the most appropriate way. I was alone, so thankfully no one except God knows what I was thinking or saying. This peaceable driving thing is still a work in progress. But generally I'm pretty cautious about zipping past someone and then cutting in too quickly. I try not to offend. I know whom I represent, although Jesus probably wouldn't drive a car anyway. I'm sure he'd take the bus so he could comfort the homeless and down-and-out, heal the afflicted and restore sight to the blind—in person.

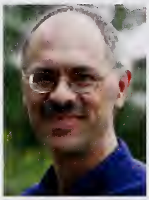
And yes, I do have a replacement sticker. I'll probably put it on one of these days.

A bumper sticker about peacemaking on the back of my car has become a reminder of where I came from and to whom I belong.

Ken Gingerich is a member of Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.

God's kingdom breaks into our world

Stanley Green is executive director of Mennonite Mission Network.



André Gingerich Stoner is director of holistic witness and interchurch relations for Mennonite Church USA.

Both André Gingerich Stoner and Stanley Green see evangelism, witness and personal transformation together with peace, justice and social transformation as vital aspects of holistic Christian witness. How have these themes shaped them personally, becoming central to their work as church leaders?

André: Stanley, from your mother, you had a strong Pentecostal influence during your growing years. You saw peoples' lives transformed and renewed through their commitment to Jesus. Then, in your final year of high school, you decided to follow Jesus. This was all in apartheid-era South Africa. How did that setting shape your faith?

Stanley: I grew up in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. In the midst of apartheid segregation it embraced the vision of a nonracial church with a profound commitment to social justice. As a boy I remember praying for many of our pastors who were detained under the Terrorism and Suppression of Communism Act because of their public witness against segregation and forced removals. I was grateful for their witness; it seemed to me to reflect what Jesus would do.

> Remembering Jesus' vision of a kingdom of justice and reconciliation helped me believe another way was possible.—Stanley Green

André: When you were 5, your own family was forced to move as the Group Areas Act was implemented. Classified as "colored," you faced barriers to getting good education and many other restrictions. How did you deal with that?

Stanley: At first I was angry at this injustice. I felt a strong temptation to become bitter. Deep down, however, I knew that the Jesus way was the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. I might have suppressed that understanding—as I am afraid many do in the face of gross violation—and found myself accommodating violence or justifying hate. But remembering Jesus' vision of a kingdom of justice and reconciliation helped me believe another way was possible. Then, by the grace of God while serving as a missionary in Jamaica, I encountered Anabaptists. They not only held these same beliefs but aspired to live by them. While studying at Fuller, we joined a Mennonite congregation. I was home.

André, you grew up in a Mennonite family and as a young adult became active in public peace witness at home and in West Germany. How did you nurture a personal faith to sustain and guide you on this journey?

André: In my mid-20s, during a Maundy Thursday service in Germany, God broke into my life in a powerful way. As I was sitting in the circle, the leader walked toward me with a basin of water to wash my feet. Many thoughts and emotions swirled through my me. I felt unworthy. Suddenly I realized that this was not about having earned anything or being good enough. The only question was whether I would accept this gift. When I did, it was as if Jesus himself was washing my feet. I was overcome with a sense of God's love. This experience took me on a journey to learn to love more like Jesus. I ended up spending three more years in Germany building relationships and sharing faith with U.S. soldiers at a nuclear weapons base.

Stanley: That reminds me of a statement from David Bosch, one of the most highly regarded mission thinkers of our time. He said, "Mission is the church crossing frontiers, in the form of a servant." Those frontiers can be across town or on the other side of the globe.

Later, André, you served as pastor of mission at Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Ind., for 16 years. How did that experience shape your understanding of mission?

André: Our leadership team didn't try to dream up projects and then get others excited. Instead we tried to pay attention to where the Spirit was moving and how we could join in—in the congregation and in the community.

I think of it this way: My wife likes to body surf on Lake Michigan. You can't force the waves to roll. But you can study them and practice jumping at the right moment. It doesn't happen every time, but when you catch a wave, it can carry you a long way. That's exhilarating.

Stanley: We are training ourselves to pay attention to the Spirit's moving. It is thrilling to partner with people all across the church as we seek the kingdom together. TM

Joseph in Egypt: a parable for Mennonites

The story of Joseph takes up more of Genesis than any other story. His suffering as a youth, the accomplishments of his maturity and the foresight of his last words are described in considerable detail. Obviously, the author of Genesis considered his story worthy of sustained attention.

As our Sunday school classes discussed Joseph's story last winter, it spoke most clearly to me as a parable for European Mennonites.

At the beginning of the Anabaptist movement, suffering and injustice drove the narrative. Later, here in the West, Mennonites gradually assimilated into broader society, gained a national reputation for good works, and saw our sons and daughters become accomplished in many areas of public life. Now might we be at the third stage of Joseph's story, when he prepared future generations for a different role?

The last chapter of Genesis records Joseph's final words to his kin: " 'I am about to die; but God will surely come to you, and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' So Joseph made the Israelites swear, saying, 'When God comes to you, you shall carry up my bones from here' " (50:24-25).

These are surprising words from a man who had assimilated so successfully into Egyptian life. He had an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife and family. He had arrayed himself in the symbols of Egyptian success, served the empire as its second in command, and traveled throughout the land representing the Pharaoh. He arranged for his brothers to settle in Goshen, the finest agricultural land available.

Yet Joseph apparently never was convinced his family's story and Egypt's story were one. In his last words of advice, he talked of a time when they would part ways from the nation that had welcomed them. By making this his last will and testament, Joseph began a conversation among his descendants that sustained their identity over the centuries. Without that conversation, it is doubtful the Hebrew people would have recognized the call of Moses two or three hundred years later.

In our time, the earth has become more densely populated and opportunities for migration less available. Yet that should not cause us to conclude Joseph's example does not apply to us. If we desire to be part of God's faithful witnesses, we will need to embrace Joseph's insight, even if its application takes different form.

What would be evidence of this insight?

- For starters, we would find opportunities to say to our families, "Our witness to Messiah Jesus does not depend on the success of the United States."
- In our public times of worship, we would acknowledge that our nation is only the latest entry on a list that includes the ancient empires of Egypt, Babylon and Rome. We would frequently remind ourselves that part of God's saving work is freeing people from the arrogance and violence empires produce.
- In our religious instruction, we would teach one another to recognize how the empire uses popular culture—especially the media—to shape our worldview and distort our understanding of justice and righteousness. We would build relationships with congregations and individuals that reside in the borderlands of the empire and ask them to correct our understanding.
- When political campaigns dominate the public discourse, we would remind one another that the major political parties are equally committed to using the violence of the empire to seize resources and kill and oppress those who resist.
- We would encourage financial investments in activities that are locally controlled and thus not as easily co-opted for the empire's purposes. And we would encourage skepticism about careers that require deep investments in the survival of centralized structures dependent on the empire's largesse.

If we want to be part of God's faithful witnesses, we'll need to embrace Joseph's insight.

Within the ebb and flow of empires, God calls forth a community to bless the peoples of the earth through its dissent and witness to another way. Joseph plays an improbable role in this history. As we Mennonites contemplate our future, we would do well to follow his example and begin a sustained conversation that distinguishes our way from the empire's way. TM

Berry Friesen is a member of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

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Mission needs Toba-Qom language

Two projects: translation of Old Testament, encyclopedic dictionary

Linda Shelly

(From left, clockwise) Cornelio Castro, José Oyanguren, Germán Díaz and Ismael Castro are compiling an encyclopedic dictionary of Toba-Qom words.

While indigenous languages are disappearing at alarming rates around the world, two Mennonite Mission Network-supported ministries among the indigenous Toba-Qom people of Argentina are ensuring that the Toba-Qom language survives and flourishes.

In one ministry, a team of Toba-Qom translators, in partnership with the Argentine Bible Society, in August finished a 13-year process of retranslating the Old Testament. (Previously only portions of the OT were available).

Meanwhile, a team of four Toba-Qom speakers is beginning a Toba-Qom encyclopedic dictionary, building from the Vocabulario Toba-Qom (Toba-Qom Vocabulary) compiled in 1980 by mission workers Albert and Lois Buckwalter.

The Toba-Qom are a 70,000-member indigenous group living mostly in the Chaco region of Argentina. While the group has faced political challenges in preserving their land, traditions and language in the face of a rapidly modernizing Argentinian society, the external pressure has also influenced a resurgence of cultural pride.

For example, the group has been popularly known as simply "Toba," a name given to them by Spanish conquistadors. They have recently reclaimed their ancestral name, "Qom."

There is also a movement for schools to become bilingual, instructing Toba-Qom students in both Spanish and Toba-Qom.

José Oyanguren, an Argentine mission worker sent by Bragado Mennonite Church who is an International Partnership Worker with Mission Network, helps prepare bilingual Toba-Qom teachers and curriculum and works with the dictionary team. He also works with a Toba-Qom Bible Institute training church leaders in their own language.

Toba-Qom community leaders have tirelessly advocated for official recognition, having won some victories. In one, the government of Chaco Province recently recognized indigenous languages (Qom, Mochoit, and Wichi) as official along with Spanish.

While the language projects are taking place in different cities with different partners, they are both contributing to the preservation of this rich and, according to the United Nations, endangered language.

A few years ago, a team of Toba-Qom translators finished revising a previous translation of the New Testament. They hope to be distributing the completed Bible within a year, after a final revision of the newly finished Old Testament. Luis Acosta, coordinator of the OT translation project, wrote: "By the grace of God, the sacrifice and perseverance of the brothers and sisters ... we can say, 'Alleluia! God is faithful.'"

Rafael Mansilla, a Toba-Qom community leader, pastor and translator, says that while the Toba-Qom people have read the Bible in Spanish and portions in their own language for many years, the new translation will bring greater insights and understanding for native Toba-Qom speakers, who will finally be able to read the full Scriptures in their heart language.

"People will be able to read the Bible in their own language, and because of this they will really know the contents of the Bible and value their own language," Mansilla says. "This Bible can bring many blessings."

Numerous workers from Mennonite Mission Network have lent support to the Toba-Qom translation teams throughout the years, including Richard Friesen, a mission worker who died in 2010 in Argentina after working with the Toba-Qom New Testament revision team for six years.

The translators, most of whom also pastor churches, have already gained many insights as a result of the work. At a women's gathering at a local church, Mansilla preached on the story of the Exodus and the role women played in the liberation of the Israelites.

"I told them that God had a plan to save God's people, and the principle actors were women: the midwives, Moses' mother and sister, Pharaoh's daughter," Mansilla says. "I hadn't noticed this before working so closely with the passage in the translation process."

Oyanguren says these projects, in addition to bringing new biblical insights, will help Toba-Qom people recognize the importance of their culture.—*Andrew Clouse of MMN*

Family of six spends two months on mission trip

In 1992 there were four Christians in Mongolia; now there are 500 churches.

Like prayer, mission trips can help families stay together. Brian and Donna Miller did just that recently, traveling to Mongolia with their four children ages 12 and under.

The Millers and their children, Raquel, 12, Kyle, 9, Rebecca, 7, and Lane, 5, who attend Martins Creek Mennonite Church in Millersburg, Ohio, served at the Mongolian Mission Center in Erdenet for two months, beginning in June. The center trains Mongolian missionaries who serve primarily throughout the Middle East and Asia. The mission trip was a first for the entire family and likely will not be their last, the couple says.

Brian had visited Mongolia in 2011 with a work team from Ohio as part of Mongolian Mission Partnership with plans to return this year. Assisted by Mennonite Mission Network, the partnership is made up of individuals, businesses and churches in central Ohio that support a Mennonite presence in Mongolia through Joint Christian Services International (JCS), a consortium of mission agencies.

Inspired by Brian's experience, the family considered doing a long-term assignment, so Donna suggested they join Brian's 2012 trip as a first step. Work team members, who joined the Millers at the end of July, included Marc Hostetler, pastor of Moorhead Mennonite Church in Holmes County, Ohio, and college students Aaron Waltman and Brett Oswald, both of Martins Creek Mennonite Church. The team traveled to Bayanhongor City and then six hours to Zag County to work on projects.

After the more than 6,000-mile and 30-hour trip from Ohio, the Millers rode an additional six hours by van to Erdenet. "It took a lot of coloring books and crayons and snacks," Donna says.

There was also the family's weeklong bout with the stomach flu (Brian was spared), but they eventually settled into a routine of work and fellowship.

Alongside local construction workers, Brian participated in projects at the Mongolian Mission Center and nearby Rainbow Kindergarten, a local outreach that serves the area's poorest children. Brian and staff at the center built a pavilion shelter where the missionary students could study.

According to a teacher at the center, the students begged to have their classes in the pavilion because it was warmer outside than inside. The students and staff are impressed with the pavilion's quality and see it as a blessing, providing shade from the intense sun.

Brian also built a seesaw for the children of staff members at the center. At the kindergarten school, which a partnership team helped build in 2005, the team replaced plastic pipes with steel piping. Donna visited the construction sites and took care of the family, including two daughters of a JCS family who manage the Eternal Springs American Bakery and Coffee Shop (a JCS Business As Mission project).

Photo provided

Brian and Donna Miller with their children, from left: Lane, Kyle, Rebecca and Raquel, visited the countryside during their mission trip to Mongolia. They served a month at the Mongolian Mission Center in Erdenet, beginning in June.

At the Eternal Springs American Bakery and Coffee Shop, Brian, Donna and their daughter Raquel held weekly English conversation gatherings, which provided opportunities for sharing as local people practiced their English. The Millers also took hour-long Mongolian language classes from a tutor. They visited with neighbors and attended church.

"The Mongolians, their hospitality is just great," Brian says. "Their common greeting in the morning is, 'Did you have a good rest?' They genuinely want to know how you're doing."

Bolortuya Damdinjav, executive director of the Mongolia Mission Center, says that in 1992 there were four Christians in Mongolia. Now there are 500 churches across the country. The center has been conducting training courses that focus on discipleship and missions.

Many of the Mongolian church members are first-generation Christians. The Jesus' Assembly, the church the Millers attended while in Erdenet, is mission focused, having sent six mission workers to other countries, including Afghanistan and China, Damdinjav says.

"It was a blessing to have the Miller family in our town," Damdinjav says. "We need mission builders who can come alongside our ministry and help us with their skills and experience."—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

Three ways churches relate to mission boards

Eastern Mennonite Missions representatives visit Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia.

Photo provided

Leaders of EMM, Kenya Mennonite Church and Tanzania Mennonite Church on the first EMM mission station in Tanzania.

With a desire to find good ways forward by going back to the beginning, Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) president Nelson Okanya and board chair Joe Sherer spent 16 days visiting Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia in September.

"I wanted to go back to EMM's international mission roots, relive what happened there and ask new questions," says Okanya.

As they traveled, Okanya and Sherer remained aware of two other missions-minded men—EMM administrator Orie Miller and missionary Elam Stauffer—who journeyed from the United States to East Africa almost 80 years ago. Miller and Stauffer arrived in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), EMM's first international mission field, in 1933, after a long trip by boat; Okanya and Sherer arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, after a mere 24 hours in the air. Miller and Stauffer searched for a place to begin mission work; Okanya and Sherer searched for what partnership with the churches that emerged from that work might look like 78 years later.

Those churches—Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania (KMT) and Kenya Mennonite Church (KMC)—recently formed their own mission board, International Mennonite Mission of East Africa (IMMEA), demonstrating their growing belief that they, too, can be part of reaching the many unreached people groups on the continent of Africa and beyond.

"We agreed that the word 'partnership' best describes a good way forward," says Okanya.

"We understand the deep gratitude behind the East African insistence that we [EMM] are their parents," adds Sherer. "But we must be resolute that we are now brothers and sisters rather than parents and children. We want to be peers learning from each other."

A recent expression of partnership in mission involves two members of KMC, Josephine Juma and Breeze Okeyo, serving in Guinea-Bissau (West Africa) this fall as part of an international EMM YES team. Okanya also foresees an East African mission leader joining and being mentored by an EMM coach and member care specialist when they visit Guinea-Bissau next year.

The planned focus on partnership between IMMEA and EMM will impact the role of the EMM missionaries serving in Kenya and Tanzania. The team has developed four strategic priorities: working with IMMEA to reach the unreached, developing mission leaders, mobilizing partners and supporting like-minded ministries.

Following their time in Kenya and Tanzania, Okanya and Sherer flew to Ethiopia for the 16th annual meeting of the International Missions Association (IMA), comprised of 22 Anabaptist member groups. Okanya addressed more than 50 mission and church leaders. "As a mission entity, how do you relate to the local church? The North American church is trying to rediscover its missional soul. Is there a way for a mission agency to help with that rediscovery?"

Okanya's questions led to vigorous discussion about the models of partnership between church and mission agency in IMA member groups.

In some, almost no difference exists between church and mission. Javier Soler, mission leader for Amor Viviente in Honduras, noted, "From the beginning, mission was part of the DNA of Amor Viviente. For us, mission and church are the same."

Other churches, such as Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, have developed departments of mission. In a third major pattern among IMA members, a mission agency functions under the authority of a board established by the church. This tends to create greater separation between "mission" and "church" than do the other two. EMM in North America, PIPKA in Indonesia, and ACMI in Kenya fall into this category. This mission agency/church distinction not infrequently creates tension between mission structures and other church structures.

"In the West, Anabaptist churches have seen the mission task as primarily a sending activity," Okanya says. "We have set up specialist structures to guide our sending activities. Local churches have had very little to do with the mission task beyond releasing workers and finances so the specialist structures could do their specialized work. But now the local church is reclaiming its rightful partnership in mission."
—Nita Landis of Eastern Mennonite Missions

Somalia's new president studied at EMU peace center

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud defeats incumbent in a runoff election ending Sept. 10.

Photo courtesy EMU archives

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the new president of Somalia, is standing in center-front among classmates at the 2001 Summer Peacebuilding Institute. This class, titled "Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach," was one of three the president took.

The new president of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, deepened his understanding of building peace in traumatized societies in three classes taken at the 2001 Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) held at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Va.

"We wish the best for you as you work to secure the peace, promote stability and restore prosperity to the people of Somalia," said EMU president Loren Swartzendruber in a congratulatory letter dispatched to president Mohamud on Oct. 4.

Challenging the incumbent, Mohamud was the come-from-behind winner in a runoff election that ended Sept. 10. He was inaugurated on Sept. 16.

"We are honored that you attended our Summer Peacebuilding Institute in 2001 and hope that some of what you learned during that time will serve you well in the coming months and years as you work with the very difficult issues that Somalia faces," wrote Swartzendruber.

Mohamud arrived at SPI 2001 as an educator who was interested in how to engage civil society in building his country. He was encouraged to attend SPI by Khadija Ossoble Ali, a native of Somalia who completed her EMU master's degree in conflict transformation in 2001.

Mohamud's attendance was facilitated by scholarship funding provided by SPI.

Joining 182 people from 45 countries at SPI 2001, Mohamud took classes in trauma healing, mediation and adult-centered education techniques.

During the era when Mohamud attended SPI, he was dean of the Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development, which prepared midlevel management and administrative technicians for reconstructing Somalia, according to his official online biography.

He was also a researcher for the Center for Research and Dialogue, focusing on postconflict reconstruction of Somalia.

In 2011, Mohamud founded the Peace and Development Party, the platform from which he launched his bid to be president.

"The election of Mohamud, a former UNICEF adviser with an unsullied reputation, appeared to give even the cynical hope," according to *The Toronto Star*.

The BBC called Mohamud a "peace activist and educational campaigner" who remained in Somalia during more than two decades of civil war, "unlike many other Somali intellectuals."

"Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's dogged determination not to give up on Somalia despite years of conflict, warlordism, piracy and Islamist insurgency has finally paid off," added the BBC.

Mohamud regularly spoke on a weekly BBC-Somali program, stressing the importance of including civil society groups in the "road map to peace." His election may be one of the outcomes of his determination to follow such a road map.

> The election of Mohamud … appeared to give even the cynical hope.—*The Toronto Star.*

As a Muslim who disavows the violent agenda of extremists, Mohamud has experienced threats to his life, including an assassination attempt two days after his election that left casualties among African Union soldiers guarding him.

Mohamud's election was the final step of a U.N.-backed plan to bring a stable central government to Somalia. The last stable government collapsed in 1991.

"EMU continues to be involved in assistance to Somalia," wrote Swartzendruber in his letter to President Mohamud. "Currently four Somali women are enrolled in a graduate certificate program in Peacebuilding Leadership at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (along with Somali women from Somaliland and Northeastern Kenya, and women from Liberia, Fiji and the Solomon Islands)." *—Bonnie Price Lofton of Eastern Mennonite University*

Refugee returns home, finds strangers on his land

Mennonite Central Committee establishes 10 peace committees.

Nina Linton

Caesaer Hakim (left) and other members, Michael Lagu, Agnew Masudio and Cecilia Eppe, attend an Opari peace committee meeting held in a school classroom.

After fleeing aerial bombings in South Sudan and living in a refugee camp in Uganda for 14 years, Caesaer Hakim and his family were excited that the day to return home had finally arrived.

But when they got to their ancestral home in Opari, they found another family living on their land.

"The first thing I was asked when I came back was if I was really from Opari," says Hakim, a father of six children ages 4 to 18. "I wanted to move back to the land where I grew up, and here you have somebody telling you that you can't build your house on your grandfather's land."

Opari is an administration district about 62 miles southeast of Juba, the capital city in the newly independent country of South Sudan. The region was among many in South Sudan, abandoned and devastated during the 21-year civil war that claimed the lives of 2 million and displaced another 4 million.

To help people resolve conflicts that arise as they rebuild their lives, the Sudan Council of Churches, with funding from Mennonite Central Committee, has established peace committees in Opari and nine other communities in South Sudan and Sudan.

The committees receive training and support on peacebuilding, conflict resolution and other activities that help people live in peace and harmony.

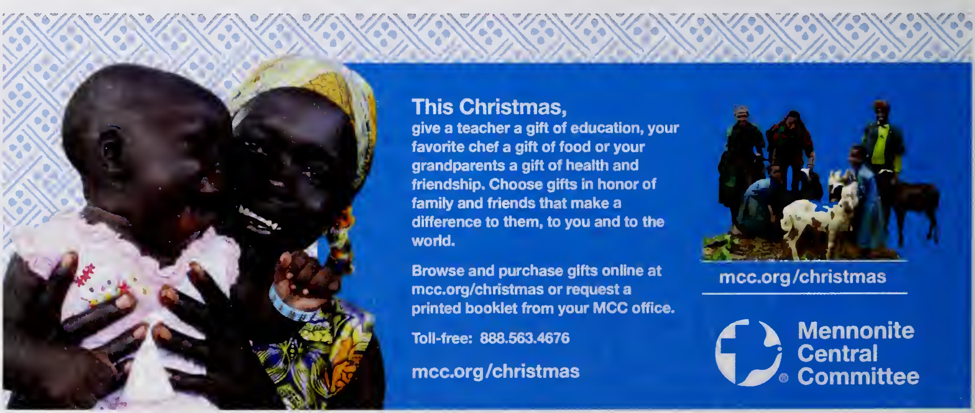
Hakim chairs the Opari peace committee. He first learned about peacebuilding in the refugee camp. One of the lasting impressions from his first training session was the cooperation among people from different ethnic groups.

"We had different needs, different languages, but we came together as one people," he says. "When I came back home to Opari, I came home with a heart for bringing people together."

His skills were soon put to the test as he dealt with the new family living on his land. "If I had not had the peacebuilding training, I would have picked a quarrel with them. Instead I built my house on another plot of land."

Neighbors are aware of this action, and the example he set earned him respect as a peacebuilder. This enables him to share his knowledge and skills as he leads the committee and helps other families resolve conflicts.

"I am like a teacher," he says. "Knowledge is like fire; it cannot be contained."—*Gladys Terichow of Mennonite Central Committee*



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Mennonite Central Committee

Three Ohio congregations plant a new church

Mennonite Central Committee worker called from Colombia to pastor.

Photo provided

Members of the LifeBridge Community Church stand outside their building during the congregation's fall festival.

In 2007, three congregations in eastern Ohio partnered to support the birth of a new peace church in their area. Walnut Creek Mennonite Church in Sugarcreek, Martins Creek Mennonite Church in Millersburg, and Berlin Mennonite Church together called Chet Miller-Eshleman to lead the initiative, offering to provide his starting salary as pastor.

At the time, Miller-Eshleman was serving with his family in Colombia with Mennonite Central Committee and, unbeknown to the three congregations, was himself sensing a call to plant a church in Ohio.

Miller-Eshleman recalls that during worship in a house church in Colombia, "God spoke so powerfully to my mind and heart, saying that I was to go to Ohio and plant a church, and that out of that church would come other churches."

Today, this new congregation—LifeBridge Community Church in Dover—has a regular attendance of around 100, is an active congregation in Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA and is helping start another church in nearby Strasburg.

LifeBridge was intended not only to become a vibrant place for community and worship but also to live out the gospel of peace. Having studied peace and conflict resolution in a graduate program at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., Miller-Eshleman has a passion for keeping an emphasis on peace and justice front and center.

Newcomer David Burch says that in the six weeks he has been attending worship at LifeBridge, he has already gleaned great insight into the nature of peacemaking.

"A message I've heard loud and clear is that pacifism doesn't mean lying down and allowing yourself to be trampled" he says. "It means standing up and proclaiming your humanity. At LifeBridge we learn about nonviolent options for dealing with violent situations, and it's just amazing."

Miller-Eshleman remarks, "LifeBridge is the peace church in town, and everybody knows it."

Everybody knows it because LifeBridge participants make a point of connecting with their community, a town of just under 13,000 people. Out of their church building, they operate a baby room where they give away car seats, cribs, strollers, clothing and anything else new parents with lower incomes might need. They run a community garden and a beef co-op. They offer mediation services and Spanish classes. While Miller-Eshleman is quick to point out that LifeBridge is far from perfect, Burch says he decided to become part of the church because "it is obvious that the congregation puts the kingdom of God before all else."

Alongside peacemaking, LifeBridge considers church planting to be important kingdom work, Miller-Eshleman says. "The congregation has embraced a vision of peppering the countryside with new churches rooted in Anabaptist discipleship and the gospel of peace," he says.

Recently, LifeBridge took the first step toward realizing this vision by supporting the birth of a new congregation—LifeBridge Community North—in Strasburg, one town over.

Joining LifeBridge in supporting LifeBridge North are the three congregations that provided initial support to LifeBridge in 2007 as well as six other congregations in the region. Together, they have formed a group called the East Ohio Church Planting Initiative (EOCPI). This group meets regularly both to organize support for LifeBridge North and to look toward starting additional churches in the future.

Ohio Conference is offering support to the EOCPI. Conference minister Tom Kauffman says, "We highlight the work of this group within our conference, hoping that it will encourage other areas of congregations to consider similar initiatives."

Retired pastor and mission worker Mattie Marie Mast has been part of LifeBridge for the last three years and is a member of the congregation's leadership team. She is also participating in LifeBridge North to support the growth of the church plant.

"It is a life-giving community for my husband and me," she says. "It is a gift to us that we are able to be a part of walking alongside and offering support to younger church planters."

With a smile, she adds, "It is not only the young adults who dream of a vibrant church, you know."—*Hilary J. Scarsella of Mennonite Church USA*

Michigan men meet above and beyond

Bill Scott mentors three men in three-year seminary program.

SaeJin Lee

From left: James Nelson, Renna Harness and Bill Scott at the September learning event at Amigo Centre, Sturgis, Mich. Not pictured: Rex Jones.

The "journey" Bill Scott is leading three men through requires biweekly meetings and retreats twice a year. On top of those scheduled gatherings, the four men in Michigan voluntarily meet every week for Bible study and prayer.

"It's really brought the four of us together," says mentor Bill Scott, pastor of Ninth Street Mennonite Church in Saginaw, Mich.

Journey is a conference-based resource sponsored by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Indiana-Michigan and Central District conferences.

The pastoral ministry preparation program uses the undergraduate curriculum of Pastoral Studies Distance Education along with mentoring and twice-a-year learning events where all participants meet together.

The three men being mentored are in the second year of the three-year program. Renna Harness is an elder at Grace Chapel Mennonite Church in Saginaw, and James Nelson is a pastor there. Rex Jones is the assistant pastor at Ninth Street.

The latest learning event took place Sept. 14-16 at Amigo Centre, near Sturgis, Mich. Some 50 participants gathered there.

Harness says he appreciates learning about the Anabaptist tradition, since he came from another denomination. Through the learning events, he also learned he is not alone. Other participants also come from different denominations.

Last year, an Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference leader asked Scott if he knew of anyone interested in the program. Scott asked the three men, and they all responded yes. Then the conference minister asked Scott to mentor them.

"I felt a little apprehensive at first because of the time commitment, but now I feel that the time spent is worthwhile," Scott says. "I'm really sold on the program."

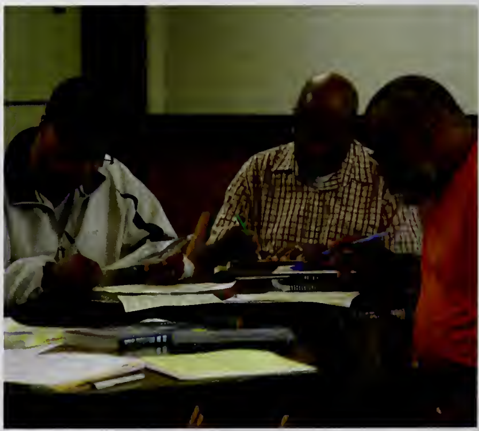
During their regular three-hour meetings, they work through the workbooks and the articles and share their responses with one another. The first year started with Anabaptist church history, followed by the role of the church community and then the role of pastors.

"We looked at a pastor as being a person, not just a leader," Scott says. "[We discussed] the things that we as individuals need in terms of time off and being able to spend time studying the Scriptures and spending time with God."

Since all four men are already in ministry, the material provides information they can apply to their teaching and preaching, according to Scott.

Harness says Scott is someone he can go to with personal problems, too.

"He's a wonderful man," Harness says. "He is knowledgeable about the Anabaptist tradition. He lets us debate when we disagree; we go back and forth until we are clear." *—Anna Groff*



Mary E. Klassen

The three men work on an assignment at the September learning event at Amigo Center, Sturgis, Mich.

Steiner receives Everence award

Ohio man works locally and internationally.

Photo provided

Traveling in Afghanistan, Steve Steiner of Dalton, Ohio, supported projects to help the Afghan people (photo by Al Geiser, who died in Afghanistan in July).

Everence named Steve Steiner, Dalton, Ohio, as the recipient of its 2012 national Journey Award. The award recognizes people who model Christian stewardship in the Mennonite-Anabaptist faith community. Steiner received the award at his church, Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church, on Sept. 30.

Steiner is a former business executive who left corporate life seven years ago to use his entrepreneurial and organizational skills in the work of the church and its organizations. He works locally and internationally on projects that run the gamut from disaster relief and social services to business development.

"He has literally organized his career and life around the principle of making sure he has the time and flexibility to be able to respond to situations when he is called upon," says Terry Shue, Steiner's former pastor and current Mennonite Church USA director of leadership development. "The stories that have grown out of these experiences are a testimony to a life lived for Christ and for others."

Steiner will be given the award—a $5,000 donation to a charity of his choice—at a presentation this fall. The donation is given in a blessing cup, symbolizing that Journey Award recipients are like vessels that hold, care and nurture resources to do God's work along their faith journey.

The national award program is in its 12th year. Last year, Everence also began giving regional Journey Awards of a $500 donation. This year's regional recipients are as follows:

- Jonas and Barb Borntrager, Harrisonburg, Va.;
- Paul and Ruth Buxman, Dinuba, Calif.;
- Dr. D. Rohrer and Mabel Eshleman, Lancaster, Pa.;
- Iglesia Evangelica Nueva Vida, Sarasota, Fla.;
- John Klumpy, Valparaiso, Ind.;
- Abe Landes, Souderton, Pa.;
- Jim Perkins, Howard, Kan.;
- Water For Life Haiti, Kalona, Iowa.

Everence is a ministry of Mennonite Church USA and other churches. *—Everence*

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'Cash cow' or a chance to share?

Authors of *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* share personal stories

Photo provided

Charlotte Penner cooking with her daughters

One businessman had a hard time getting his head around the idea of the *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* authors giving all their royalties to charity.

Charlotte Penner and her husband, Tony, live in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and she loves to cook. So Charlotte agreed to cook a meal from the popular cookbook she helped write, *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* (Herald Press, 2011), at the home of a friend for a group of businessmen.

Her friend chose recipes from the cookbook, including borscht, zwiebach, red cabbage, kielke, farmer sausage, glazed carrots, cookies and "pie by the yard" for Charlotte to cook for the group.

> I also love the fact that I am keeping my heritage alive by cooking the foods my ancestors ate. I learned that one can eat very well using a few basic ingredients.—Clare

"The men were very pleased with the meal," Charlotte says, "but one of the men commented to me that we were sitting on a 'cash cow,' and someday I would be very rich."

The cookbook is a bestseller in Canada and altogether has sold more than 30,000 copies in a year and a half.

Charlotte responded, "I hope so, but I won't be the one who becomes rich. All the royalties are going to our charity."

She explained to him how the group of 10 women who author the *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* blog and book of the same name all decided that the royalties would go to the Good Shepherd Shelter in Ukraine.

The man said, "I can understand you giving a portion of it to charity, but all of it?"

Charlotte told him about the Mennonite heritage and how of all the cookbook authors, either their parents or grandparents were born in Russia. Moreover, many of them had escaped under what they felt were miraculous conditions.

"I was able to share our story, our Christian faith and how that related to our cookbook. I also said that those of us in North America who own one house and one car make us among 8 percent of the richest people in the world. How could I possibly want more, when 92 percent of the world needs more?"

He, perhaps as in the parable of the rich young ruler in Matthew, Mark and Luke, continued to shake his head in disbelief.

Working through Mennonite Central Committee, the *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* authors decided a worthy project was to build a greenhouse on the property of the Good Shepherd Shelter in Makeevka, Ukraine.

"The goal is to raise $67,000 to build and give support to the greenhouse," says the *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* blog, to "provide a sustainable source of healthy food for the children in the shelter and for the children at risk in the local community."

The women say that when that project is funded, they will continue to give 100 percent of their royalties to feed hungry children through another prayerfully selected project.

Charlotte says that most of the authors' ancestors came from the Ukraine area. "I am first-generation Canadian. My parents and grandparents are from Ukraine," says Charlotte. They had to flee in 1943.

Her father came to Canada before her mother, both as children. Charlotte's mother lived in a Paraguayan colony of Mennonites for nine years while she waited to emigrate to Canada.

"With all the loss and the tragedy that they experienced during those years, we were a very, very close-knit family. My husband is from Paraguay, and his whole family wasn't around in the beginning of our marriage. Raising our kids has been with an appreciation of having family and church around to call on when needed."

The Penners have three children and are members of Douglas Mennonite Church.

"We really felt that we wanted to honor our heritage and Christian beliefs to serve others and share our resources. Having visited Ukraine myself, I realize how very blessed I am to be living in Canada," she says.

The orphanage provides shelter and basic life needs for neglected and abandoned children including food, clothing, education, health care, and spiritual and emotional support.

Most readers are delighted not only to find the cookbook, blog and a community of people with similar heritage, they are happy to have part of their purchase go to charity.

Doris wrote on the blog, "I … appreciate that the royalties are helping children. How very 'Mennonite!' "

She went on, "As I flipped through the pages, I began to cry; oh, the memories that came flooding back. I have some recipes that I got from my mom, but the monster that is called Alzheimer's took my mother's memory from her far too soon, so many of the recipes were lost. As I turned each page, a little gasp and a smile: I remember eating that. So thank you. I have only a few of the recipes that my Oma [grandmother] and Mom used to make, and *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* has helped fill in the gaps. I also purchased two additional copies for my daughters so that they can also share in my heritage."

One reader, Clare, said, "I also love the fact that I am keeping my heritage alive by cooking the foods my ancestors ate. I learned that one can eat very well using a few basic ingredients."

Pauline wrote, "I have been following your blog for a while. When your book came out in a bookstore in Waterloo, where I live, I had to buy it for my collection. I sat alone one night reading it, and I felt like I was back in the kitchen with my maternal grandmother, Katherine Funk. She lived in Winnipeg but would travel by train to Ontario to spend time with us. I recognized so many of the recipes that my mother still makes. At the end of the book I felt moved close to tears for the memories it brought back. I'm working my way through your recipes, in part as an homage to my 'Choo-choo train Oma' as we used to call her."—*Melodie Davis of MennoMedia*

Beatriz Photography & Design

The full group of the "Mennonite Girls"

Hispanic pastors focus on integrating faith, finances

Goshen seminar offered by Mennonite Education Agency and Everence

Approximately 20 pastors from seven states gathered Oct. 4-6 for a continuing education event offered by Mennonite Education Agency's Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education program, in association with Everence.

Everence was host for the program, "Integrando Fe y Finanzas," or "Integrating Faith and Finances." All the presentations and discussions were in Spanish.

Topics included a theological overview of stewardship, preaching and teaching about money, personal and church budgets, and how Everence can serve congregations.

> This was an outstanding event. The pastors were very engaged and asked that we do this again.—Jim Alvarez

"This was an outstanding event," says Jim Alvarez, chief financial officer of Everence and one of the presenters. "The pastors were very engaged and asked that we do this again."

Participants came from New York, Kansas, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana.

In addition to Alvarez, presenters included Nelson Kraybill, lead pastor of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., and president emeritus of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; Steven L. Fath, an Everence financial advisor; and Denise Wayman, operations manager for Everence Federal Credit Union.

The Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education program offers training, biblical and theological education programs and continuing education events for Hispanic pastors.

The program is an office of MEA that works in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network and Iglesia Menonita Hispana.

Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives.

Everence offers banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education.—*Joint release of Everence and Mennonite Education Agency*

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CMU opens Graduate School of Theology and Ministry

Canadian school will partner with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Photo provided

The Shaftesbury campus of Canadian Mennonite University, where the new Graduate School of Theology and Ministry will be located

Building on the vision of its founding colleges and its Anabaptist church owners, Canadian Mennonite University opened its new Graduate School of Theology and Ministry in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Sept. 19.

"Opening the graduate school renews and formalizes CMU's commitment to inspire and equip students for pastoral ministry, leadership, scholarship and service," says Karl Koop, director of the graduate school at CMU.

"The Graduate School of Theology and Ministry continues to have significant connection with various inter-Mennonite denominations. It will serve uniquely as a teaching center of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary Canada and is a member of the Winnipeg Theological Cooperative and a partner with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and Steinbach (Manitoba) Bible College.

"We are excited to partner with MBBS Canada, and we look forward to welcoming our newest faculty member, Andrew Dyck, to campus in the new year," says Earl Davey, interim president.

Dyck's appointment as assistant professor of ministry studies at CMU is jointly funded by MBBS Canada and the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba.

The announcement was made in June by the board of directors of MBBS together with the Canadian Mennonite University board of governors.

Dyck will teach or give leadership in the area of spiritual formation, worship, preaching, ministry supervision, evangelism, leadership development, and pastoral care and counseling.

In addition he will serve as a resource person for the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Conference.

"His years of experience in pastoral ministry, combined with his studies in Christian spirituality, will very much benefit our students and, through them, the larger church," says Davey.

Dyck will teach alongside CMU's emerti and faculty professors at the CMU Graduate School, including Paul Doerksen, Irma Fast Dueck, Dan Epp-Tiessen, Gerald Gerbrandt Pierre Gilbert, Titus Guenther, Chris Huebner, Harry Huebner, Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Karl Koop, Gordon Matties and Gordon Zerbe.

"As a community of scholars, committed to the life of the church, experienced in mission and service, and accomplished in research and publication, the faculty together bring significant gifts and experience to their role as teachers and mentors of our students," says Davey.

CMU's graduate programs of study include a Master of Arts in Christian Ministry and Master of Arts in Theological Studies, as well as a Certificate in Christian Studies, with courses in Bible, history, theology, ethics and in practical theology and ministry.—*Canadian Mennonite University*

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- HOLY LAND TOUR WITH TRACY SPROAT (Mar 13-21/2013
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- EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL WITH TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17/2013)
- FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF MOSES WITH PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31/2013)
- BEHIND THE VEIL: EXPERIENCING EGYPT (Oct 17-28/2013)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR RICH BUCHER (Nov 5-14/2013)
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Dale Gehman

Whatever happened to Diamond Street?

Freeman Miller describes success, demise of North Philadelphia congregation.

Members of the Diamond Street Mennonite Church in north Philadelphia form a procession at a Sunday morning worship service. Eastern Mennonite Missions dates the photo to 1997. Edward Nikiema is in the pulpit and Margaret Ekway at the microphone.

Whatever happened to Diamond Street? is a question I have often been asked, especially in reference to the community center project. It's a fair question and one that deserves a thoughtful answer. For the sake of the many people who were involved over the years—directly or indirectly—let me offer a few reflections. As a former pastor and board member, I had an inside view for many years. Even so, mine is only one perspective.

From 1942 on, Diamond Street Mennonite Church had a rich and fruitful ministry in its north Philadelphia neighborhood and beyond. Thousands of person-hours, dollars, prayers and a host of ministries touched countless lives with the love of Jesus. It is not unusual to meet people who attribute the beginnings of their Christian life to the "Come to Jesus Church"—so called by local residents because of the large cross attached for decades to the front of the row house with the simple invitation, "Come to Jesus."

In the early days, 1814 W. Diamond became the place where many parents sent their children for summer camps, Sunday school and Bible clubs. Their children were safe there and cared for with love. They got grounded in the Word of God, being gently guided to faith in Jesus through Bible stories, songs, memorization and simple prayers.

Emma Rudy and Alma Ruth were the original resident "sister workers," often holding open-air children's classes and visiting families in their homes. They were aided by many others over the years as the ministry grew. Sunday school, Bible school and worship services were established. Ordained ministers drove in from Souderton, Pa., and Lancaster, Pa., on weekends to preach and counsel while the sister workers carried on the daily ministries: sewing classes and food distribution. Outreach groups handed out from house to house an evangelical tract entitled *The Way*. An Anabaptist hub of hope was taking root in the inner city.

That is the first "bookend" of the story. Let's quickly look at the other "bookend"—the current realities—before describing some of the intervening growing pains and what we learned.

Today there is a thriving young urban congregation at 1632 W. Diamond, the former masonic hall where Diamond Street moved in the early 1980s, a few blocks from the original site, launching the Diamond Street Community Center (DSCC) project. The church currently occupying that building—Epiphany Fellowship—is reaching a new generation with the holistic gospel of Jesus Christ. While they are not organically connected to the Anabaptist network in the city, they carry on a vision similar to the "original" in many ways and remain relationally connected with us as we attend events or meet them in the neighborhood. I will say more about them later, but for now let me just note that the building and vision were not abandoned when Diamond Street eventually relocated, changed its name and became nondenominational. (We remain relationally connected to them as well.)

Between those two "bookends" the story is much longer and much more complex. The early years of faithful ministry at Diamond Street bore much fruit. In addition to people coming into the city, many in the neighborhood became part of the growing church. Over time, more and more local families began calling Diamond Street home. Gifted new members and attenders began working side by side with the sister workers and pastors in the various ministries—teaching, discipling, leading worship, running Sunday school and summer camp programs.

Some of the people who served the longest at Diamond Street grew up not far from the church and gave most of their adult lives to serving Christ in the church. Some became pastors or went into mission assignments at home and abroad. After the urban tumult and riots of the 1960s, the church, with indigenous leadership, began to focus on applying gospel principles to the pressing social issues of the day—racism, violence, justice, peace—in new ways in its urban context.

This new focus ultimately led to a move a few blocks away, to the abandoned four-story masonic hall. The move was in line with a growing vision to develop holistic ministries to serve the city, a vision nurtured by John Perkins and others. It was also an attempt to help the neighbors save the large landmark building, slated for demolition.

How that miracle unfolded would fill a separate book. The church and community joined hands to form a new nonprofit organization called Diamond Street Community Center to take on this new project. The board of directors was comprised of a majority of church members along with other like-minded adults from the neighborhood. They became the new owners of the corner building in 1979 via the city's Gift Property Program. The only cost was the $13.50 title-transfer fee, along with evidence of a viable plan.

Many people from inside and outside the city became involved, including Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), various conferences and congregations, alongside church members and neighbors. A multitude of workers rolled up their sleeves to renovate the building and launch various ministries, including a health center and a large meeting room for worship and special events. The church continued to grow, filling up the newly renovated space. A dynamic multicultural gospel choir blossomed, blessing many in the city and beyond, including Mennonite World Conference Assembly in France in 1984. In the long and arduous task of renovating the building, it seemed that God's people were also undergoing continuous revitalization.

From the beginning, the task of taking on the corner property by our small group seemed overwhelming. But at every turn, when the task looked impossible, God provided miraculous answers to prayer, convincing us not to give up. Those serving and those being served experienced the grace of God in unprecedented ways. As in many urban ministry situations, the original vision needed constant revision and adaptation. What made the Diamond Street project so dynamic, complex and at times frustrating was the incredible mix of people and perspectives.

During the quarter century of renovating and developing the center, there were many changes in leadership, ownership, membership, programs and vision. Changes in leadership—both at pastoral and board levels—meant changes in direction. New plans were proposed, old ones jettisoned or revised, new ones implemented. Slowly another floor of the building was renovated and new initiatives launched. The holistic health center offered quality health care to many. Youth ministries operated all year long. Local seniors enjoyed many meals as they made pottery and took field trips. An AA group helped people stay sober. A career center prepared young and old to find and hold jobs. A local chapter of Habitat for Humanity took root. Weddings, concerts and community events were hosted. As the building increased in capacity, resource fluctuations were always an issue. Funding dried up, needs changed, people left or new people and funding became available. Viability, sustainability and relevance were ongoing issues. Cultures and traditions collided even as a new culture was being born.

A few examples may illustrate: One ongoing issue was the composition of the community center board. The bylaws stipulated that a majority of the board were to be church members; the others could be people from the community. From the beginning, we announced the community center as a joint venture between church and community, serving the needs of both. Sometimes this board composition seemed to work well; at other times the ratios needed adjusting. (The Gift Property deed transfer required local involvement and ownership.)

Some potential donors wanted to have a complete 10-year plan—along with evidence of long-term sustainability—while indigenous wisdom knew that keeping demolition bulldozers away for a few years was considered progress in the inner city. Some thought the space for the church sanctuary should be front and center. Others thought it should be present but not dominant. One argued for flexible seating and multiple use while another wanted fixed pews. Some thought there should be a cross, at least in the sanctuary; others weren't so sure.

Navigating these varying viewpoints was always a challenge, but in the process we listened, we learned, we grew. Iron sharpened iron. God was doing a new thing among us. The struggle was worthwhile. It was exhausting and exhilarating kingdom business.

The quiet little church on the corner had become thoroughly engaged in the community. A church member even heard a rumor at city hall that the Mennonites were taking over the city. That struck our little struggling group as holy hilarity.

Because there were few models to learn from, we needed to be pioneers at heart, convinced that

(Continued on page 46)

God wanted to do something new but not always sure what or how. Would it really be possible to experience in a modern city what the early church did in the ancient city of Antioch (Acts 13)? Could cultural barriers really come down and multicultural leadership teams emerge with fresh ideas?

Our rich blend of ethnicities, backgrounds, educations, cultures and worship styles lent themselves to deepening our unity in the midst of diversity by the grace of the Holy Spirit. We were being transformed and also stretched, sometimes way beyond our comfort zones. We attempted to keep Christ central in all we did, but we realized all too often just how human we were, how easy it was to misunderstand, to seize power, to be insensitive, to jump to conclusions before hearing all sides. We needed God's daily grace and large doses of humility as we struggled to work together in God's urban people garden.

When the church later dwindled in size and could not raise the funds to repay the sizeable loan, some thought EMM should simply forgive the loan. Others argued for fulfilling our agreement. In the end, EMM offered to absorb the debt and the outstanding loan payments for three years while the church regrouped in an effort to reassume ownership. Regrettably, even after various attempts, that did not materialize, and the building was eventually sold to Epiphany Fellowship, which grew out of The Cross Movement, an urban Christian rap group. Today, Epiphany Fellowship is a thriving multiethnic church, recently planting a new church across the river in Camden, N.J. Epiphany is filling (and still renovating) the building, with two services each Sunday and a variety of ministries. (See www.epiphanyfellowship.org for details and updates.) Last year they built an adjoining playground for local children. A new legacy is emerging in North Philadelphia, and we praise God.

As Paul the urban church planter reminds us, one plants, another waters, but only God can give the increase. We can never be sure the results will resemble the original vision. But one thing is certain, "You know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Even those who left Diamond Street and moved on to serve elsewhere or helped plant or grow churches in other cities carried the vision with them. We found that God's dream for the urban church is not confined to one building, neighborhood or generation. It is being reborn daily, especially now that over half the world's population lives in cities. In spite of some failures and a steep learning curve for some of us, Jesus is building his urban church, and the gates of hell will not have the last word.—*Freeman Miller, retired from bishop duties in Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, adjunct instructor in urban studies at Messiah College Philadelphia campus, former pastor at Diamond Street Mennonite Church (1975-87) and director of home ministries for Eastern Mennonite Missions (1987-90)*

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WORKERS

Freeman, Philip, was licensed as deacon of King of Glory Tabernacle, Bronx, N.Y., on Sept. 8.

Howes, Michael, began a term as intentional interim pastor at Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Sept. 1.

Imchen, Toshi, was installed as interim pastor of Kauffman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on Sept. 16.

Moyo, Ron, a recent graduate of Hesston College Pastoral Ministries Program, was licensed for Christian Ministry at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., on Sept. 9. Ron will serve as pastor of Whitestone's Saturday Evening Worship.

Sensenig, Karen, was ordained as lead pastor of Habecker Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Aug. 19.

OBITUARIES

Andrews, Paul Weaver, 100, Harrisonburg, Va., died Aug. 12. Spouse: Fannie Mae Jane Knicely Andrews (deceased). Parents: David Henry and Elizabeth Weaver Andrews. Children: Chloe Williams, Cheryl Pennington; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 24 at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg.

Bender, Vida Hazel Kretzhman, 91, Springs, Pa., died Aug. 20. Spouse: Byard Bender (deceased). Parents: Harry and Harriet Haselbarth Kretchman. Children: Davis, Beckie Martin, Janet Bender, Nancy Stueber, Don, Jim; four grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 23 at Springs Mennonite Church.

Bergey, Betty J. Rice, 85, Hesston, Kan., died Aug. 16. Spouse: John R. Bergey. Parents: Leo and Emma Rice. Children: Diana Hershberger, Jack, Priscilla Bergey, Mary Hope Cartagena; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Memorial service: Aug. 31 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Bower, Mildred L. Rush, 88, Hatfield, Pa., died Aug. 31. Spouse: Merton Souder Bower (deceased). Parents: Raymond and Sallie Leatherman Rush. Children: Dennis, Carol Bower, Donald, Mary Rothenberger; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 5 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield.

Christner, Freeman E., 88, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 4. Spouse: Arlene Hartzler Keim Christner. Spouse: Waneta Miller Christner (deceased). Spouse: LaVerta Gerber Christner (deceased). Parents: Eli J. and Polly Yoder Christner. Children: Shirleen Weaver, Gary Christner, Connie Kauffman; four grandchildren; step-children: Kay Nusbaum, Becky Bryan, Tom Gerber, Carolyn Springer, Darlene Affolder, Gary Gerber; 13 step-grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Christner, Martha P. Leichty, 83, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 9. Spouse: Levi Christner (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Clara Harshberger Leichty. Children: James, George, Mary Letherman, Bonnie Christner, Carol Hooley; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Clapper, Gary S., 69, Red Lion, Pa., died Aug. 10. Spouse: Marian S. Ebersole Clapper. Spouse: Joseph F. and Flo I. Ebersole Clapper. Children: Heather Trudel, Mark, David; six grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 14 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Godshall, Ray Willard, 79, Lansdale, Pa., died Aug. 23, of cancer. Spouse: Phyllis E. Koder Godshall. Parents: Willard and Esther Moyer Godshall. Children: Brian, Christina Wrubleski, Caroline Miller; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 23 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Gotwals, Lucille Yoder, 82, Telford, Pa., died Aug. 4. Spouse: Robert S. Gotwals. Parents: Reuben and Mary Zook Yoder. Children: Susan Gotwals, Brent, Chris; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Gross, Emma Walter, 92 Freeman, S.D., died Aug. 4. Spouse: Joe A. Gross (deceased). Parents: Jacob F. and Sarah Hofer Walter. Children: Nancy Weber, Sherwin; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Hershberger, Neva Lou Jantz, 85, Wellman, Iowa, died Aug. 28. Spouse: Bernard M. Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Ezra and Ruth Hawkey Jantz. Children: Bernard J., Gloria Hershberger, Rita Trimpe; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 1 at Powell Funeral Home, Wellman.

Hollinger, Lloyd L., 89, Lititz, Pa., died Aug. 19. Spouse: Edith Marie Horst Hollinger. Parents: Mahlon S. and Katie E. Leaman Hollinger. Children: Marilyn Weaver, Clyde, L. Kenneth, Roseanne Gingrich, Jane Good, Brenda Grimes, Ellen Kanagy; 20 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Stony Brook Mennonite Church, York, Pa.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite.* Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

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Hostetler, Marvin Dean, 56, West Des Moines, Iowa, died Aug. 8. Spouse: Donnita Payne Hostetler. Parents: Samuel and Dorothy Hostetler. Children: Rachel Sterling, Josh; one grandson. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Westover Funeral Home, Urbandale, Iowa.

Janzen, Jac. D., 84, Altona, Manitoba, died Aug. 14. Spouse: Caroline Janzen (deceased). Parents: David D. and Katherina Enns Janzen. Children: Elizabeth Harder, Alan, Mildred, Irma Bennett; nine grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 17 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Johns, Galen Ira, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 5, of cancer. Spouse: Areta Graber Lehman. Spouse: Edith Mae Hoover Johns (deceased). Parents: Ira Samuel and Elizabeth Rickert Johns. Children: Steve, Lois Kauffmann, Loren, Lin, Joe, Rachel; 14 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 10 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Lehman, Paul J., 93, Ephrata, Pa., died Aug. 11. Spouse: Naomi Krady Lehman (deceased). Parents: Christian Kendig Lehman and Mary Leaman Lehman. Children: Judy Stoltzfus, Jim, Jerry; seven grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 26 at Pilgrims Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Leichty, Barbara G. Wing, 50, Hesston, Kan., died Aug. 14. Spouse: Brad Leichty. Parents: Robert and Doris Mueller Showalter. Children: Brandon, Brett; one grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 16 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Martin, Elizabeth Sauder, 102, New Holland, Pa., died May 31. Spouse: Daniel Hoover Martin (deceased). Parents: Peter Eaby Sauder and Ida Emma Martin Sauder. Children: Mary Zehr, Luke, Aaron, Raymond, Robert, Earl, Grace Dickerson; 23 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 5 at Garden Spot Village Chapel, New Holland, Pa.

Maust, Elmer R., 90, Pigeon, Mich., died Aug. 9. Spouse: Marie Overholt Maust (deceased). Parents: Earl and Idella Overholt Maust. Children: Wendel D., Marge A. Maust, Marvin D., Faye D. Hurren, Gale; 10 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Pigeon River Mennonite Church, Pigeon.

Miller, Mary Louise Witmer, 84, Estes Park, Colo., died Aug. 14. Spouse: James Miller (deceased). Children: Sherie Strong, Larry; one grandchild; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 19 at Chrustuan Church of Estes Park.

Miller, Merlin Robert, 83, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 31. Spouse: Sara Grace Hostetler Yoder Miller. Spouse: Leona Miller (deceased). Parents: Marvin E. and Katie Wenger Miller. Children: Darrell Miller, Gerald Miller, Dennis Miller, Virgil Miller, Joyce O'Bannon, Jeanette Miller, Lois Bontrager, Sandra Good; step-children: Christian Yoder, Carol Yoder, Tim Yoder, Katie Mast; 29 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 4 at Mount Pleasant Mennonite Church, Chesapeake, Va.

Miller, Virgil, 72, Archbold, Ohio, died July 19, of cancer. Spouse: Mary Ann Zook Miller. Parents: Charles and Bessie Frey Miller. Children: Audra Mark, Brian; four grandchildren. Funeral: July 23 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Peachey, Paul, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., died Aug. 18, of cancer. Spouse: Ellen Elizabeth Shenk Peachey (deceased). Parents: Shem and Salmone Bender Peachey. Children: Janet Peachey, Barbara Anne Piekarski, Carl, George, James; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Schellenberg, John A., 71, Altona, Manitoba, died Aug. 3. Spouse: Helen "Lena" Abrams. Parents: Henry R. and Anna Schellenberg. Children: Pauline Mack, Pearl Friesen, Derrick, Lisa; four grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 9 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Shank, Carl E., 89, North Lima, Ohio, died Aug. 4. Spouse: Olga Csorba Shank (deceased). Parents: Walter and Mabel Spiker Shank. Children: Jeffrey, Douglas; seven grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 8 at North Lima Mennonite Church.

Siemens-Rhodes, Heidi Jill, 38, Goshen, Ind., died June 24, of metastatic melanoma. Spouse: Mitchell Wayne Siemens-Rhodes. Parents: Mark Stanley and Jan Doris Lautt Siemens. Children: Theodore Kazuo, Adam Hae, Ira Khalil, Willa Esperanza. Funeral: June 30 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Snyder, Dwane Monroe, 74, Parnell, Iowa, died Aug. 6, of emphysema. Spouse: Annie Irene Schlabach Snyder. Parents: Andrew Grant Snyder and Dora Alice Kempf Snyder. Children: Larry Leon, Bernice Marie Marner, Beverly Irene Helmuth, Earl Dean Snyder, Neva Colleen Sperr; 13 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell.

Stoll, Judith Ann Grabner, 64, South Bend, Ind., died June 17. Spouse: Herman "Jack" Stoll. Parents: Frank and Dorothy Fern Grabner. Children: Kim Porter, Kelly Tranberg, Kevin; five grandchildren. Funeral: June 21 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Stuckey, Bill E., 80, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 2. Spouse: Valetta "Becky" Stuckey. Parents: Eli and Mary Nafziger Stuckey. Children: Kathy Nofziger, Douglas, Amy Stuckey; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 6 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Weaver, David M., 93, Atglen, Pa., died July 20, from complications of Parkinson disease. Spouse: Martha Kauffman Coffman Weaver. Spouse: Katie B. Martin Weaver (deceased). Parents: Joseph M. and Marie Z. Martin Weaver. Children: Anna Mary Wenger, Elizabeth Bonnar, Ellen Weaver, Kathleen Burger; six grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Step-children: Ella Huber, Julia Schlabach, Alma Milton, Norman Joseph Coffman; 11 step-grandchildren; 15 step-great-grandchildren; one step-great-great-grandchild. Funeral: July 31 at Groffdale Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Weaver, Helen Esther Wiens, 82, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 18. Spouse: Samuel H. Weaver. Parents: David K. and Elizabeth "Lizzie" Wiens. Children: Michael, Matthew; two grandchildren. Funeral: July 22 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Wenger, Harold, 93, Wayland, Iowa, died July 15. Spouse: Stella M. Roth Wenger (deceased). Parents: John R. and Katie A. Christner Wenger. Children: Alice Hsu, Richard, Joanne denBleyker, Lois Klopfenstein, Rodney, Marilyn Hershberger, Ruth Ann Brenneman, Gary; 17 grandchildren; 30 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland.

Yoder, Elsie V. Yoder, 91, Columbiana, Ohio, died July 15. Parents: William R. and Emma Horst Yoder. Funeral: July 31 at North Lima Mennonite Church, North Lima, Ohio.

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Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., is looking for a ***full-time lead pastor or a husband/wife co-pastor team***. This is our primary interest; however, all applications will be considered. Anticipated starting date is April 1, 2013. Springdale is an active participant in Mennonite Church USA and Virginia Mennonite Conference. Membership is 160 and attendance around 120-130. We are looking for a candidate with strong skills in preaching, pastoral care and church leadership from an Anabaptist perspective. MC USA guidelines for salary and benefits will be followed. Church website: www.springdalemennonite.org. Contact person: Danny Showalter, Chair of Search Committee, email dcs@ntelos.net, telephone 540-943-2392.

Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church, a vibrant, growing congregation of 150 located adjacent to Washington, D.C., seeks a ***part-time (.50 FTE) associate pastor***. The successful candidate will be strongly committed to Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and practice. A primary focus of the position is the spiritual formation and Christian education of our children, youth and young adults. A secondary focus is furthering the congregational emphasis on peace and justice issues, primarily through teaching and preaching. Responsibilities include preaching up to 10 times a year. A seminary degree is desired. Denominational guidelines for pastoral salaries and benefits will be followed. Interested candidates should contact the search committee at pastorsearch@hyattsvillemennonite.org.

Bethesda Mennonite Church, located in rural Henderson, Neb., is seeking a ***full-time lead pastor*** to lead a multipastoral team. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology, along with strong preaching, leadership and communication skills. A Master of Divinity degree with pastoral experience is required. The Bethesda congregation is a member of the Central Plains Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Interested persons should contact the Central Plains Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler, at P.O. Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247; 319-458-0224.

The Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference is accepting applications for the position of ***conference administrator***, a 10-hour-a-week position, in the LA area. The administrator provides essential coordination and logistical support and is the administrative focal point for the conference minister, board of directors and affiliated groups. Send resumé to dickdavis@pacificsouthwest.org.

The Brethren in Christ Church in the United States (www.bic-church.org), based in Grantham, Pa., seeks candidates to serve in the church's ***primary leadership role***. The selected candidate will serve as the church's most visible leader for the 22,000-member denomination, with 262 congregations in seven regional conferences. This individual also will guide the church's seven denominational ministries and be a liaison with other church-affiliated ministries, colleges, schools, camps, publishing entities and historic sites. Overseeing a budget of $4.6 million, this leader will have direct supervisory responsibility for six regional conference bishops and two executive directors of denominational ministry units. Qualified candidates will hold at least a master's degree, have experience in large/complex organizational settings and support the Brethren in Christ core values, as well as their articles of faith/doctrine. Candidates may come from various professional experiences, including education, health care, social service, business and church ministry. Interested candidates should contact Kirk Stiffney with MHS Alliance at Kirk@StiffneyGroup.com or 574-537-8736.

East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church seeks ***full-time pastor***. Our 180-member congregation in the City of Lancaster, Pa., attracts children, young adults, families and older people. Members are involved in the congregation's neighborhood, Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite World Conference and Lancaster County Council of Churches. Many serve in business, church agencies and various professions. Our congregation seeks to:

- be transformed by God's mercy, grace and love;
- introduce our children and neighbors to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- equip one another to live peaceably and generously; and
- contribute to the well-being of Lancaster City and the wider world.

To lead that effort, our congregation seeks a pastor with Anabaptist perspective and a seminary degree, preferably with experience in congregational leadership. For information, contact Search Committee Chair Elvin Kraybill (elvin.kraybill@gmail.com) or Lancaster District Overseer and Search Committee member Jason Kuniholm (jkuniholm@gmail.com).

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is seeking two energetic ***disaster response coordinators***. One is to be based in the Central States and cover the western half of the United States. The other is to be based in and cover the eastern half of the United States. The primary responsibility is to train, mentor and encourage the MDS units and regions to respond to disasters from investigation, cleanup and project setup through completion. Extensive travel required. Applicants must be active in an Anabaptist church and committed to the Anabaptist faith and peace position. See the full job description at http://mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment. Resumés may be sent to jobs@mds.mennonite.net or MDS, Attn: Human Resources, 583 Airport Rd, Lititz, PA 17543. Review of resumés begins immediately. Recruitment continues until the positions are filled.

Eastern Mennonite University announces a tenure-track, continuing ***faculty position in piano*** with additional responsibilities in music theory or music history beginning Fall 2013. Doctorate preferred, master's degree required. Performance experience and ongoing professional experience/scholarship expected. Responsibilities include teaching private piano at the university level and possibly in our Preparatory Program, teaching all levels of music theory or music history and performing in collaborative and solo settings. Nine-month contract. Salary and rank determined by education and experience. EMU uses a tenure-with-review contract system. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable) and three reference letters by Nov. 15, 2012, to Dr. Nancy R. Heisey, Vice President and Undergraduate Academic Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, http://www.emu.edu, ugdean@emu.edu. Applicants will be acknowledged by letter or email. Review begins immediately. Applicants will be asked to respond to questions specific to EMU's mission after the initial inquiry. EMU reserves the right to fill the position at any time or keep the position open. AAEO employer. We seek applicants who bring gender, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Eastern Mennonite University announces a full-time, tenure-track ***faculty position in theater*** beginning Fall 2013. Ph.D. or MFA required. Teaching and professional experience required. Responsibilities include teaching theater history, playwriting and other courses in areas of expertise (i.e. acting, performance art, film, design, applied theater) and directing in the departmental season. Applicants should demonstrate a strong commitment to the collaborative creative process within an undergraduate liberal arts environment and embrace the opportunity to build a young theater department that seeks adventurous, socially engaged theater and expansion of traditional performance canon. Applicants should welcome teaching and creating at a Christian university that values diversity of expression. Nine-month contract, salary determined by education and experience. Eastern Mennonite University uses a tenure-with-review contract system. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable) and three reference letters to Dr. Nancy R. Heisey, Vice President and Undergraduate Academic Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, http://www.emu.edu, ugdean@emu.edu. Applicants will be acknowledged by letter or email. Review begins immediately. Applicants will be asked to respond to questions specific to EMU's mission after the initial inquiry. EMU reserves the right to fill the position at any time or keep the position open. AAEO employer. We seek applicants who bring gender, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Short-term rental in Boston, two-bedroom furnished condo. Rent several days to several weeks. $70/night or $450/week. Contact: dorothysmucker@gmail.com; 717-413-9132.

Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community (www.vmrc.org) seeks a ***chief executive officer*** to lead its 700+ resident/47-acre campus in Harrisonburg, Va. This Mennonite-related CCRC has a $25 million budget and 400+ employees. Qualified candidates will have strong financial acumen, extensive board experience, at least a bachelor's degree (master's degree preferred), 8+ years of senior management experience in a complex organizational setting and an appreciation for the Anabaptist tradition. Interested candidates should contact Caryn Howell with MHS Alliance at Caryn@StiffneyGroup.com or 574-537-8736.

Eastern Mennonite University announces a full-time, tenure-track ***faculty position in sociology*** beginning Fall 2013. Ph.D. and experience in higher education required. Practice experience strongly preferred. Applicants should be trained in sociology and will ideally have experience in some area of international development, humanitarian assistance and/or environmental and social sustainability. Courses will focus on sociology but may also include international and community development, social work, human rights, conflict resolution, or environmental and social issues, depending on the experience, qualifications and interests of the applicant. Nine-month contract, salary determined by education and experience. Eastern Mennonite University uses a tenure-with-review contract system. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable) and three reference letters to Dr. Nancy R. Heisey, Vice President and Undergraduate Academic Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, http://www.emu.edu, ugdean@emu.edu. Applicants will be acknowledged by letter or email. Review begins immediately. Applicants will be asked to respond to questions specific to EMU's mission after the initial inquiry. EMU reserves the right to fill the position at any time or keep the position open. AAEO employer. We seek applicants who bring gender, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Johann, the first novel published by Everett J. Thomas, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

BIPOLAR*genetics*
RESEARCH STUDY

Researchers are looking for genes that may affect a person's chances of developing bipolar disorder.

You can participate in this research study if you are over 18, have a bipolar diagnosis, or have a family member with bipolar disorder. This study includes a telephone interview (2-4 hours) and a blood sample (bloodwork from your physician.) **Contact Diane Kazuba 301-496-8977, 1-866-644-4363, email: kazubad@mail.nih.gov** TTY: 1-866-411-1010 or Write to Diane Kazuba, National Institute of Mental Health, Building 10, Room 3D41, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-1264

National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health
Department of Health & Human Services www.clinicaltrials.gov Protocol No: 80-M-0083

No travel necessary. No cost to participate. Financial compensation provided.

The greater goal

Jon Heinly is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite School.

I came across an interesting quote attributed to John Lennon: "When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy.' They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life."

Though there is some question of whether it is a genuine Lennon quote or an apocryphal attribution, it's certainly humorous to imagine a presumptuous little shaggy-haired John Lennon getting cheeky with his teacher. But even as it causes a smile, this story also brings a twinge of conviction and sadness as I realize that many of us fall into the trap of this teacher. Too often we aim at attaining particular goals rather than developing as individuals.

This awareness coincided with a recent experience in my life. I'm generally not a quitter, but I dropped a seminary class this semester because I was overly stressed to the point of experiencing negative consequences. For a couple of weeks, my goal of completing the seminary class was higher than the goal of being the person I desire to be.

The pursuit of happiness involves giving up those desires that are out of order for the sake of becoming the people God intends us to be.

This was a wakeup call for me. I became painfully aware that my drive for achievement was trumping my desire to demonstrate the love of Christ in my relationships at home, work and in my community. Granted, I've completed numerous classes in the past while remaining the type of person I want to be, but this class stood in the way of a greater goal. For me, being a loving and caring person is more important than accomplishing an objective.

The quote also related to my job. I spend a lot of time advising high school students on college and career questions. Sometimes they tell me that adults in their lives care more about what they want to be than who they want to be when they grow up. This sounds a lot like the teacher in the quote.

In my own story, what I want to be is a seminary graduate. This is a good goal. However, who I want to be is more important. I want to be loving, caring, compassionate and a good listener.

My students have good goals, too. They want to be teachers, pastors, engineers, musicians, pilots, farmers and missionaries. As I assist them in reaching those good goals, I need to help them make sure these future achievements do not become more important than the types of people they will become. Will they be compassionate doctors? Will they be lawyers who are committed to justice and truth? Will their farming reflect a love for God, their neighbors and creation?

Discipleship should not neglect to address goals and objectives, but it should be more focused on the development of Christian character. According to the story, Lennon understood at an early age that happiness was more important than reaching career goals. Interestingly, Saint Augustine and many other theologians and philosophers throughout history have equated knowing happiness with knowing God. Genuine happiness was found only by putting the pursuit of God at the place of greatest importance in life.

As demonstrated by the teacher in the story and my own recent struggle, it is not easy to keep our priorities aligned. Seeking after true happiness is not as simple as it may first appear. Our misplaced pursuits come so naturally that Jesus tells us as disciples, "If you want to save your life, you'll lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it." The pursuit of happiness involves giving up those desires that are out of order for the sake of becoming the people God intends us to be.

Certainly we should call our young people to accomplish great things in life and to make the most of their potential, but we should always be attentive first and foremost to the development of Christlike character, never supporting its sacrifice for the sake of reaching a goal. And because we know that example is a powerful thing, let's make sure we pursue our own development as individuals so others can observe what it means to have rightly ordered lives.

FILM REVIEWS

The Master (R) explores the relationship of two lost souls—Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix), who returns from the Navy after World War II and Freddie drifts through a series of PTSD-driven breakdowns, and Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the charismatic leader of The Cause, a cult that uses hypnotic exercises to clear the emotions. The film is stunningly shot, and the two main performances are outstanding. Those looking for a clear resolution will be disappointed.—*Gordon Houser*

Argo (R) recounts the true story, with white-knuckle suspense added, about a CIA "exfiltration" specialist who concocts a risky plan to free six Americans who take shelter at the home of the Canadian ambassador after Iranians take other U.S. embassy workers hostage in 1979. Director Ben Affleck captures the context of Iranian hatred of the United States for supporting its support for a ruthless dictator.—*gh*

The Perks of Being a Wallflower (PG-13) captures the feelings of Charlie, a high school freshman who is not only an introvert and smart but lost his best friend to suicide and suffers from a mental illness. Two seniors, step-siblings Sam and Patrick adopt him into the "wallflowers," their group of outsiders, and help him adjust to the real world. This film is a gem.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEW

MAKING FRIENDS AMONG THE TALIBAN

Making Friends Among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan by Jonathan P. Larson (Herald Press, 2012, $15.99) unveils the life of Dan Terry, a remarkable man who gave his life serving the people of Afghanistan. Larson eschews straight chronology and uses multiple stories to show how Terry, who was killed in 2010, overcame barriers and exemplified loving one's enemies.—*gh*

Books on community, work and guns

In time for your Christmas shopping—or just for your own edification—here are some recent books to put in your bag.

Community: Christine D. Pohl points out that "human beings were made for living in community, and it is in community that we flourish and become most fully human." In her book *Living in Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Eerdmans, 2012, $20), she explores four practices that sustain community: expressing gratitude, making and keeping promises, living and speaking truthfully, and offering hospitality. The book is wise and practical.

Also practical is David Janzen's *The Intentional Community Handbook: For Idealists, Hypocrites and Wannabe Disciples of Jesus* (Paraclete Press, 2012, $17.99). While addressed primarily to those interested in intentional Christian community, there is much to learn for anyone wanting to strengthen their own congregational life. Janzen uses stories and draws on his many years of experience in intentional community.

Cultivating Sent Communities: Mission Spiritual Formation, edited by Dwight J. Zscheile (Eerdmans, 2012, $30), takes a more theoretical approach, even as it draws on case studies from Ethiopia, England, Leipzig and San Francisco. Zscheile calls the church "a *product of* and *participant in* God's mission." The book's nine essayists emphasize the need for spiritual formation in congregations seeking to participate in God's transforming work.

Work: Mennonites have long emphasized that our faith must be practical and apply to our daily lives. In *Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2012, $16), R. Paul Stevens looks at stories throughout the Bible to develop a theology of work. He asks, What is good work? He finally answers that we work in faith, in fellowship with God; in love, in fellowship and interdependence with coworkers; and in hope, "engaging the powers that frustrate God's life-giving realm on earth."

How the Church Fails Businesspeople (and what can be done about it) by John C. Knapp (Eerdmans, 2012, $15) takes a critical look at the cultures of business and the church. Knapp writes: "Church priorities continue to tilt heavily toward private faith and away from ministries that might equip believers for a robust public faith." He adds that "crucial questions about vocation and money … are met with indifference, confusion or even hostility."

Guns: James E. Atwood claims that he had "not come across even one book written for the faith community that puts the 30,000 gun deaths we experience each year in biblical and theological perspective and calls on the church to speak up and speak out." So he wrote *America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé* (Cascade Books, 2012, $27).

He is an avid hunter who owns guns but believes, like many members of the NRA, that they should not be exempt "from safety requirements, wise regulations and restrictions."

When he speaks in churches, many criticize him for raising a political issue in church. He writes: "There are political dimensions whenever guns are discussed, but what happens in society *because of guns* makes them a profound spiritual concern that must be dealt with by people of faith."

Atwood carefully describes the idolatry of "the Gun Empire" and addresses the violence in our culture, the Principalities and Powers, the Second Amendment and policies that perpetuate murder.

He ends with a wake up call for the faith community that includes 15 specific actions we can take to help save lives. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

RESOURCES

The Moral Disciple: An Introduction to Christian Ethics by Kent A. Van Til (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) highlights the centrality of Christ and the Christian faith in moral formation and offers an ethical framework to gude Christians as they engage a host of moral dilemmas, including those surrounding wealth, sexuality and the end of life.

The Power of All: Building a Multivoiced Church by Sian and Stuart Murray Williams (Herald Press, 2012, $15.99) sees God working in churches that encourage the participation of all members. As renewal movements crop up throughout history, the authors write, God's Spirit is repeatedly poured out on all believers.

Desert Fathers and Mothers: Early Christian Wisdom Sayings Annotated and Explained by Christine Valters Paintner (SkyLight Paths, 2012, $16.99) presents sayings of ordinary Christians living in solitude in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Arabia in the third and fourth centuries. Their spiritual practice formed the basis of Western monasticism.

'Talks' That Teach: From Bessie King Yoder (1906-2008), compiled by Dorothy Yoder Nyce (Evangel Press, 2012, $7) collects more than 60 talks on diverse subjects that reflect an era—mostly 1960s-1990s—and rural, Mennonite communities. They convey one woman's influence in a setting where few women were known for public voice. Order from Dorothy Yoder Nyce, 1603 S. 15th St., Goshen, IN 46526-4558.

The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (Zondervan, 2012, $14.99) asks why we Christians eat together, fast, make promises, live together, would rather die than kill, share good news and why it matters where we live. A six-session DVD study by Wilson-Hartgrove and Shane Claiborne is available for $26.99 from Zondervan.

Winds of the Spirit: A Profile of Anabaptist Churches in the Global South by Conrad Kanagy, Tilahun Beyene and Richard Showalter (Herald Press, 2012, $13.99) show how Anabaptist churches of the Global South have more in common with the church in the first three centuries than with contemporary Anabaptist churches in Europe and North America.

The Gospel of Rutba: War, Peace and the Good Samaritan Story in Iraq by Greg Barrett (Orbis Books, 2012, $25) tells how three U.S. Christian peacemakers early in the Iraq War were rescued after a car accident by Iraqi Muslims who took them to the bombed-out town of Rutba. The peacemakers returned there in 2010 to thank the doctors and contribute to ongoing peace.

Handling divorce
An upside to downsizing
Moving on
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$50 awarded to the winner of each category.
Submission guidelines must be followed to qualify.

2013 TM photo contest

Photo Illustration
Tim Kauffman, May 2012*

Nature
Dennis Gingerich, Sept. 2012*

Work, Service, Play
Brenda Shelby, Oct. 2012*

Enter your photos in *The Mennonite's* 2013 contest.

Your original work may be chosen for future publication in *The Mennonite*. For submission guidelines and photo categories, go to www.themennonite.org/issues/15-10/articles/Photo_Contest_2013.

Submission deadline: January 31, 2013

* Photo shown as it appeared in print

Signposts: A witnessing community

He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
—Micah 6:8 (TNIV)

As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.—Acts 4:20 (TNIV)

The Mennonite churches in Indonesia have a lot to teach us about being engaged in God's mission. In September, I visited churches in Indonesia at the invitation of the Jemaat Kristen Indonesia. (See page 35 of the October issue for more details.) JKI is the newest of the three Mennonite conferences, or synods, in that country. I had the pleasure of preaching and teaching at their seminary and in several congregations. I also met with pastors and church leaders in several locations. On two occasions, the gatherings had representatives from all three Mennonite conferences.

I was particularly encouraged by my visit to the Injil Kerajaan (Gospel of the Kingdom) Church in the city of Semarang. This dynamic megachurch has a highly visible public witness. The members worship in a 5,000-seat facility that they call the Holy Stadium. Their facility serves not only as a worship center but as a school building for their 4,000 elementary and high school students. They are constructing buildings for a college, a hospital and an orphanage. The congregation also touches their community in visible ways through assistance with small businesses. Their church campus will likely serve as the venue for the 2021 assembly of Mennonite World Conference.

Each Sunday, a large worship team and costumed dancers lead this charismatic congregation in worship and praise. After the service, people have the opportunity to purchase locally grown organic rice from the farmers who produce it, at prices that enable these farmers to hold their heads high. This stands in contrast to the many places around the country where farmers are paid a pittance for rice that is shipped and sold at a high markup in the cities.

Thousands of Muslims come in and out of this facility for a variety of services, including regular times of worship and prayer for healing. The people who are touched by this congregation stand as witnesses to the close connection between dynamic Christian worship and fair economic practices. The church has found such favor with city officials that they regularly seek the church's assistance and counsel in ventures to enhance the welfare of the city. This is impressive, given the deep tensions that often exist between the small minority of Christians and the majority culture in this nation with the largest population of Muslims in the world. These enthusiastic followers of Jesus exemplify a mission trait embraced by Mennonite Church USA.

Missional character trait: This community has a vital public witness.

Signpost: The church makes an observable impact that contributes to the transformation of life, society and human relationships.

As a Mennonite church, we have known about this missional principle for a long time. This belief propelled a Sunday school class in Kansas to begin a ministry that blossomed into Mennonite Disaster Service. The same impulse prompted pioneers in faith to organize Mennonite Central Committee. The same faithful drive impelled business people to start Mennonite Economic Development Associates, which provides business opportunities and resources to help lift people out of poverty. These ministries have become a visible sign of our belief that allegiance to Jesus Christ touches every aspect of our lives.

In the same way, congregations all across our church are ministering to the diverse needs of their neighborhoods. Some of these ventures may come to the public eye, while others remain largely out of view. We needn't worry about the visibility of our public witness. Rather, let's be sure that we touch the lives of our communities in a way that brings God's healing and hope to the world. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

It's a privilege

Everett J. Thomas

The CSX railroad company likes to boast about its fuel efficiency. In radio and website ads it claims it can move one ton of freight 500 miles on one gallon of fuel. Well, of course they can. At every railroad crossing all other vehicles must stop as they move along at the most efficient speeds. A more honest fuel mileage claim would factor in the fuel being burned as vehicles sit and wait for the train to pass. Maybe the claim should also include the fuel used by bulldozers to make hills level or fill in valleys to create easy grades. How about amortizing in the energy used to dig the tunnels and build the bridges?

When it comes to traffic, railroads have a privileged position in our country. They are given all the advantages and then take dishonest credit for their efficiency and success.

This is analogous to another privilege. Most of us who are white have become successful because of institutions, traditions and a society that gives us privileges not afforded to underrepresented racial/ethnic people. That's why it is called "white privilege."

I'd rather boast about getting 500 miles to the gallon than wait at a crossing gate as a train goes by.

In 1995, a group of Mennonite leaders convened a conference in Chicago called "Restoring Our Sight." The theme was linked to the story of Saul going blind on the road to Damascus and then having his sight restored—but with new eyes to see. It is where I was first confronted by the privileged life I lead. That one-time gathering unleashed a groundswell of interest and was the genesis of the Damascus Road programs sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee.

The efforts to dismantle racism in the church since that time have given us a vocabulary we did not have before. "White privilege" is one example. It also gave us analytics to understand how churches and institutions can slowly and painfully dismantle racism.

One such analytical tool is a continuum that explains that when more overt forms of racism are addressed, the underlying attitude mutates into more subtle—and more difficult to see—forms of racism. Of course, the more subtle forms are also more difficult to prove.

So as we see people of color gain higher profiles in our denomination, I've been watching for this mutation. What would we feel if a majority of members on institutional boards were people of color? It could happen.

Next year we will have the first Hispanic woman to serve as Mennonite Church USA moderator. We will have one and maybe two women of color chairing churchwide agency boards. As people of color move into these positions of power, they will intuitively sniff out any covert forms of prejudice and bias based on racial differences.

But there is another phenomenon that may be more significant. Last winter, nearly 100 leaders of color from all across Mennonite Church USA met in Florida to talk about the future of the church. This gathering, entitled "Hope for the Future," will convene again in January 2013. Participation is by invitation only; no white leaders are invited.

When I first learned of last year's event, I was intrigued. When I discovered I wasn't invited, I had a strange feeling of apprehension. Then I realized I was confronting the entitlement that comes with white privilege.

The challenge for the church, then, is to be vigilant about the ways racism can become covert in our attitudes and responses. After all, I'd rather boast about getting 500 miles to the gallon than have to wait at the crossing gate as a self-righteous railroad ignores my existence.—*ejt*

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TheMennonite

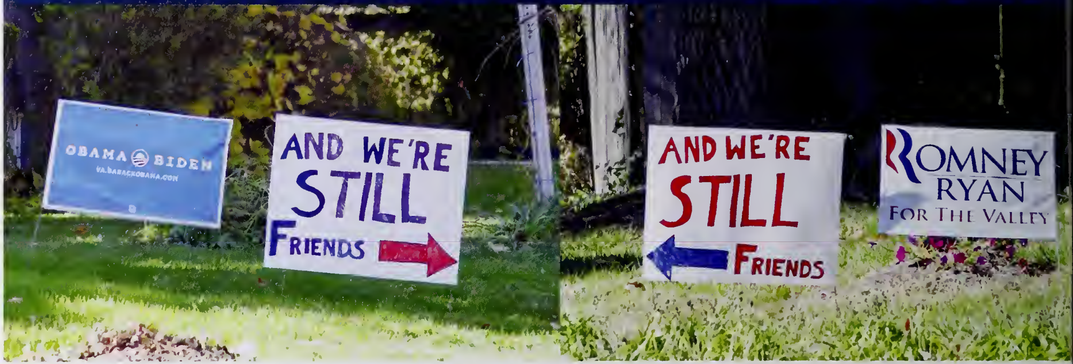
The ironies of Advent

December 2012

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- Saint John
- Ain't gonna study war no more
- First impressions and hospitality
- Women confront gender-based violence
- God needs Marys



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AND WE'RE STILL FRIENDS
ROMNEY RYAN
FOR THE VALLEY

Neighboring EMU and Goshen grads posted these signs Nov. 3 in their yards. By Nov. 6 – U.S. election day – more than **55,000** social media users had seen and shared photos of the signs.

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TheMennonite December 2012 | Volume 15, Number 12

CONTENTS

DEC 0 8 2012

12 The ironies of Advent
—Jane Hoober Peifer

15 Questions to women leaders
—Kim Vu Friesen

16 Ain't gonna study war no more
—Duane Hershberger

20 Where is your heart?
—Don Clymer

23 Why I've stopped saying, 'We are a nation of immigrants'
—Kevin D. Miller

27 Business is business
—Simon Schrock

32 Patricia Shelly nominee for moderator-elect
—Jenn Carreto

34 Harders plant Spanish-speaking church
—Wil LaVeist

36 Board wants five-year plan for *The Mennonite*
—Anna Groff

37 Missions, schools share history in Puerto Rico

38 MennoMedia's first-year loss more than projected

40 30 Kenyan church workers meet in Nairobi
—Debbi DiGennaro

42 'Day of the Dead' offers living voices
—Melanie Zuercher

44 Christian Peacemaker Teams advocate for Kurds
—Garland Robertson

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters
6 News Briefs
8 Grace and Truth
9 Global Anabaptism
10 Miscellany
12 Features
30 Leadership
31 Opinion
32 News
44 News Analysis
46 For the Record
51 Classifieds
52 New Voices
53 Mediaculture
55 Mennonite Church USA
56 Editorial

ON THE COVER: Faithful members of Tshikapa Mennonite, Congo, continue to gather for morning prayers beside their storm-ravaged building. Photo by James Krabill

TheMennonite
December 2012 | Volume 15, Number 12

The Mennonite is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries within Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite,* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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The Mennonite
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517

STAFF
Editor: Everett J. Thomas
everettt@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Gordon Houser
gordonh@themennonite.org
Associate editor: Anna Groff
annag@themennonite.org
Advertising, subscriptions: Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
Bookkeeper: Celina Romero
Editorial assistant: Nora Miller
Design: Dee Birkey

WEBSITE www.themennonite.org

OFFICES
3145 Benham Avenue, Suite 4
Elkhart, IN 46517
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

718 N. Main St.
Newton, KS 67114-1703
phone: 866-866-2872
fax: 316-283-0454

P.O. Box 1896
504 W. Choctaw Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
phone: 928-338-6016
fax: 316-283-0454

Mennonite Church USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

More on vaccines and autism

We respect the clinicians' response "Autism and Vaccines: Let's Think Again" (October) and agree with their statement, "The mainstream research consensus holds that an underlying genetic predisposition combined with exposure to some environmental condition(s) precipitate the onset of the condition." We, too, recognize complexities and multiple causal possibilities associated with neurological disorders. Yet we continue to uphold that the thimerosal preservative, which is mercury-based and used in some vaccines, needs greater scrutiny as a significant causal factor for potential harm.

Knowing that evidence-based science guides medical practice, we are aware of 90 published studies, many of which register a concern for harm with this preservative and the need for further study. We invite readers to do a web search "Vaccination news: has thimerosal been absolved of causing vaccine harm?" and review the highlighted relevant data, most of which is available through PubMed database.

We are pro-vaccine safety and therefore grateful that some physicians are choosing to administer only thimerosal-free immunizations. Within the United States, thimerosal may be found in multidose vials of the flu shots, adult tetanus vaccines and meningitis immunizations. With minimal cost difference, it makes prudent sense to choose the safer option of single-dose thimerosal-free vaccines.—*Sheryl Shenk, Harrisonburg, Va., Yvonne Hershey, Kinzer, Va.*

Editor's note: *Shenk and Hershey originally published an Opinion column in our August issue. The clinicians they mention here responded to their claims in an October Opinion column.*

Possible Holocaust connection

Regarding the March article describing Mennonite involvement in the Holocaust: reference was made of Heinrich Wiens (born March 22, 1906, in the village of Muntau, Molotschna, Ukraine). I suspect he may be a fairly close relative of my late great-grandmother, born Wiens in the Molotschna but eventually died in Nebraska or Kansas. Is there a genealogy website that might help me determine if this infamous Heinrich Wiens is a relative of mine?—*Robert Loewen, Neepawa, Manitoba*

Can't dip toes in politics

Regarding the October articles, "2012 Presidential Election Sparks Three Initiatives" and the editorial "Election Day Communion": I applaud the initiative suggested by Schloneger: having Communion services as statements of unity across the country; prayer and fasting as ways to keep our hearts, minds and bodies focused on God and Jesus Christ; and to not be drawn into the presidential political struggles by abstaining from voting for either presidential candidate.

That is why I was saddened to read in Thomas' editorial the statement, "Vote on Election Day and then return to what matters the most: the unity of the body of Christ." I cannot even start to count all the ways that saddens me. Thomas echoed many of the positive statements of Schloneger's article. And I think he suggests correctly that by making theological issues into political issues we engage in divisive conversations that lead to conflicts.

But briefly "dipping our toe" into political waters and then coming back to resume fellowship in the body of

Christ is not the answer either. If we need to withdraw from unity in order to vote, the price is too high. And if voting causes a loss of unity in the body of Christ, then it does not matter who leads the country, the state or any other political boundaries because we have already lost sight of higher allegiance we are to have to God.—*Carole Boshart, Eugene, Ore.*

It's white privilege

Regarding Thomas' editorial, "It's a Privilege" (November): As I read it, I reflected back to the time I left the Mennonite church. I didn't leave God. I just found another church. It was because of experiencing what I perceived to be racism, and it shook me because I had never encountered racism *in church* until that moment.

I am a 46-year-old black female who was raised in the Mennonite church. I was actively involved and really groomed for leadership.

I attended Bethany Christian High School in Goshen, Ind. Upon arriving on campus in August 1984 to begin my freshman year, the first thing I did after getting settled in was to identify where the Mennonite church was located so I could attend Sunday morning. On Sunday morning I walked into that Mennonite church, and no one greeted me. In fact, no one said one word—literally not one word. All the chatter that I heard before I opened the door instantly stopped. I took a few steps in, and although all lips were closed, all eyes were fixed on me like trained lasers. I froze in my tracks, hoping and waiting for someone, anyone to break the awful and awkward silence. No one had the courage to extend a welcome to the black kid, and I wasn't groomed enough to handle the situation I encountered that Sunday morning—one I never thought would happen in the church.

Reading the editorial made me a little sad that I didn't have the courage on that Sunday morning way back in August 1984 to just announce, "I'm here, I'm staying and I'm bringing more like me, so pull yourselves together."

Thanks so much for the editorial and much more for an honest evaluation of what confronts the Mennonite church ahead as it becomes more racially diverse. I pray you'll have the courage to say what I could not way back on that Sunday in August 1984: "They're here, they're staying and they're bringing more like themselves, so pull yourselves together."—*Robinzina Bryant, Flossmoor, Ill.*

Everett Thomas' analogy, comparing "oppressor" freight trains with "white privilege" and implicitly labeling the automobile, waiting for a freight train, as the "oppressed," is reversed. It is the automobile that is the oppressor—a tool of death and destruction that causes the loss of thousands of lives annually, pollutes, exploits nonrenewable resources and consumes sacred farmland and inner-city neighborhoods for its roadways.

These roadways give rise to suburban sprawl that has harmed our cities. It is this auto that is analogous to "white privilege." The railroad, on the other hand, is much safer and more efficient in hauling goods and people. Railroads pay local property taxes and, at their own expense, maintain the rails and ties.

While there are corporate abuses—as with many large corporations—the railroads thrive in spite of government policies that have favored auto and truck use. The railroad, as a thriving "victim," might be more accurately compared with those who thrive in spite of being targets of the "white privilege" that I personally take for granted.—*Richard E. Martin, Evanston, Ill.*

IN THIS ISSUE

In our cover story, "The Ironies of Advent" (page 12), Jane Hoober Peifer reminds us that this season carries with it "happy hoopla" as well as people crying to God to "come down and do something" about the problems in the world.

"Just because Christmas is coming," she writes, "doesn't mean cancer is leaving, that the wars are over and the soldiers are all coming home, that jobs suddenly appear for the scores of unemployed among us or that tensions between us disappear."

In his article on page 23, Kevin D. Miller explains why he has stopped saying, "We are a nation of immigrants." His reasons: Immigration is usually done by people wanting to change countries—not the situation for African slaves brought here or people living in the Mexican territory that our country annexed in 1845.

On our Opinion page, another pastor weighs in on the use of the word "missional" and an earlier columnist's suggestion we replace it with "bearing witness" (page 31).

The news section leads off with an introduction of Patricia Shelly as the nominee that delegates will be asked to affirm as moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA next summer at the Phoenix convention (page 34). The news section also describes the challenges faced by two denominational entities struggling with changing reading habits: our own magazine (page 36) and MennoMedia (38). Anna Groff's article on page 36 also reports on changes coming to our moratorium and letters policies; those will be the subject of next month's editorial.

Finally, we say goodbye to one of our New Voices columnists. Sharon Kniss writes her last column and describes how her new experiences at Notre Dame (Ind.) University compare to Mennonite values of stewardship and community.—*Editor*

Church burglarized, stolen heater causes fire

CLINTON, Miss.—A flash fire damaged Nanih Waiya Indian Mennonite Church over the weekend of Nov. 2-4 after someone removed an infrared heater from the wall and left the propane on. Nanih Waiya is located near Philadelphia, Miss.

Church members reported the burglary and fire after arriving at church on Sunday morning, Nov. 4. Neshoba County Sheriff's investigator Grant Myers said someone kicked a door in on the fellowship hall building near the church to gain entry.

A three-grate infrared heater and a 19-inch TV/VCR combination were reported stolen.

"The gas was left on when the heater was removed from the building," Myers said on Nov. 7. "After a period of time the room filled with propane and was ignited, we believe, by the pilot light on the stove, causing a flash fire. Extensive damage was done to the building, which was behind and to the side of the church."

On Nov. 10, two men from the local Mennonite Disaster Service unit and a couple from a neighboring Mennonite church helped fix the fellowship hall. They washed down the walls and put in a new ceiling and lights.

Nanih Waiya was bombed in 1964 during the Civil Rights movement—the first of three racially motivated bombings to the same church facility. Two others occurred in 1966. The church is part of the Gulf States Mennonite Conference and is an active member of Native Mennonite Ministries.—Neshoba Democrat *and Carol Roth*

Paul Hunt

Cleaning up after Hurricane Sandy

Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers put damaged drywall out for garbage pickup in Staten Island, NY. MDS volunteers also worked in Garrett Co., Md., removing downed trees and branches.—*MDS*

J. Harold Moyer, composer and arranger, dies at 85

NORTH NEWTON, KAN.—John Harold Moyer, Bethel College professor emeritus of music who was known by many for his hymn arrangements and musical compositions, died Oct. 28 in North Newton at age 85.

Ten hymns in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, used in many Anabaptist congregations in North America, bear the name J. Harold Moyer as composer, arranger or tune harmonizer.

Moyer was born May 6, 1927, in Newton, Kan., to John F. and Helen Isaac Moyer, the youngest of three brothers (Herman and Melvin, both deceased).

Moyer was drafted in 1945 into Civilian Public Service (CPS). He served at Camp Camino in California and at the Mennonite Central Committee office in Akron, Pa.

After CPS, he graduated from Bethel in 1949, then went to George Peabody College in Nashville, Tenn., where he earned a master of music degree with a composition major in 1951.

Later he completed his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa with a music composition major in 1957.

Moyer taught two years at Goshen (Ind.) College, then began teaching at Bethel College in 1959, mainly music theory and composition. He also taught at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, for one year, 1973-74. He continued to compose and arrange as he had time.

From 1960-67, Moyer was involved in developing *The Mennonite Hymnal*, the first joint hymnal venture between the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church. Thirteen of the hymns in *The Mennonite Hymnal* contain an original Moyer tune or harmonization.—*Melanie Zuercher*

'Improbable story' of humanitarian worker to air on ABC-TV

HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ont.—*Weaving Life: The Life and Death of Peacemaker Dan Terry* airs on network TV Oct. 21-Dec. 16 at the discretion of participating ABC stations.

Weaving Life tells how Dan Terry, a United Methodist who worked with Mennonites through the years, wove relationships, joy, partnership and understanding into his lifelong work in Afghanistan. Terry, 64, was among 10 humanitarian aid workers assassinated in Afghanistan in August 2010.

Going against the grain of almost all

conventional wisdom, the documentary shows how Terry set out to build bridges where "everyone else was blowing them up," says production consultant and storyteller Jonathan Larson. "He spans the chasms of suspicion, religious hatred and outright warfare, with patient bonds of trust and openness."—*MennoMedia*

Canadian government says magazine too political

ELKHART, Ind.—In the Nov. 12 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, editor Dick Benner reported on a letter he received from the Canada Revenue Agency reminding him that as a registered charity his magazine cannot participate in partisan politics. The CRA letter cited six editorials and articles considered political advocacy. Benner also said the Canadian Church Press association surveyed its 80 members, and no other periodical had received such a letter.

"This is a politically motivated attack on a publication," says David Harris, publisher of *Presbyterian Record*. Harris says some Mennonite politicians whose actions *Canadian Mennonite* highlighted may have requested the "reminder." —*Everett J. Thomas*

Pauls begins as CMU president

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Cheryl Pauls began as president of Canadian Mennonite University Nov. 1.

Pauls, who was appointed last February, follows President Gerald Gerbrandt, who served as sole president from 2003 until his retirement on June 30, and interim president Earl Davey, who served in this capacity from July to October and now returns to the duties of academic vice president.

Pauls is a graduate of one of CMU's predecessor colleges, Mennonite Brethren Bible College, and holds a doctorate in musical arts from the University of British Columbia.—*CMU*

World Fellowship Sunday set for Jan. 21, 2013

Each year Mennonite World Conference (MWC) encourages Anabaptist-related churches around the world to worship around a common theme on a Sunday close to Jan. 21. On that day, in 1525, the first Anabaptist baptism took place in Zurich, Switzerland.

World Fellowship Sunday provides an opportunity to remember common roots and celebrate worldwide community by planning a worship service that will help participants enter fellowship, intercession and thanksgiving with the global faith family.

The 2013 worship materials include biblical texts, prayers, song suggestions and sermon ideas. They are the fruit of the joint work of members of Colombia's three MWC member churches: Iglesia Christiana Menonita (Mennonite Church), Iglesia Hermandad en Cristo (Brethren in Christ) and Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas (Mennonite Brethren).

The material is now available on the MWC website, in English, French and Spanish: www.mwc-cmm.org.—*MWC*

Winter brings new needs to Syrian refugees

AKRON, Pa.—As snow and temperatures begin to fall in the Middle East and violence in Syria shows no signs of abating, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is intensifying its response to meet basic human needs.

For more than a year, Syrian civilians have been on the move, seeking shelter away from the fighting between the Syrian army and opposition groups.

In Aleppo, where fighting was intense for most of October, MCC is providing $45,000 of emergency food, milk, diapers and basic medical supplies and shelter for about 500 families through two local churches.—*MCC*

Vada Snider

Academic center mural reflects facets of Bethel

At the dedication for his ceramic mural in Bethel College's newly renovated James A. Will Academic Center on the North Newton, Kan., campus, artist Conrad Snider, a 1984 graduate, explains some of the symbolism. This includes, visible here, the threshing stone side view which has imprints of the Bethel College seal in the center, as well as the text that records the college's four core values of discipleship, scholarship, service and integrity.—*Bethel College*

How can this be?

Isaac Villegas is a pastor at Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church

"Mom, what's in your belly?" I asked my pregnant mother when I was three years old. "Oh, that's your sister. You'll get to meet her soon."

From the look of my puzzled and curious face, she realized her only child needed help understanding.

"In a few months, you'll have a friend to play with, a sister," she explained. "Her name will be Cynthia, and she'll live here with us, in our house, in the room next to yours."

I latched onto the idea of having a friend living in my house, someone to play with all the time.

One night my dad woke me up and told me that they were headed to the hospital but would soon be back with my baby sister. I couldn't sleep. With the night light as my beacon, I rummaged around in my closet, cataloging the games, sorting the toys, deciding what to bring to my first encounter with my new best friend. I expected endless hours of fun and wanted to be prepared.

The next day, when I heard baby Cynthia in her crib, I walked over to her room with my collection of Hot Wheels and lined up the little cars along the edge of her crib. Who could resist racing Hot Wheels? My sister could, apparently. She paid no attention to my toys and me; she ignored my attempt at friendship. Rejected, I took my cars across the street to play with my friend Matt.

During Advent, we relearn how to wait for a gift we don't know how to receive, … a savior who arrives in an unexpected place: the uterus of a young, poor, unprepared and frightened girl.

Looking back, obviously I didn't understand my parents' announcement: that from inside my mom's belly would soon emerge a friend for me. Neither did I know how to prepare for Cynthia's arrival: that she would be a friend, yes, but not like I expected, not a friend like my other friends, not another one of the same. While I heard the announcement, I didn't know what to expect or how to prepare for her life.

During the season of Advent, we find ourselves in my position at 3 years old, waiting for the unanticipated, preparing for the unexpected. During Advent, we are drawn into a story that asks us to welcome the Messiah who defies our predictions and assumptions.

The Christmas story invites us into a posture of wonder, of curiosity and confusion, of thinking the unthinkable, of believing the unbelievable. In this season of bewilderment, our guide is Mary. We follow the lead of a frightened teenage girl from a town of ill repute ("Can anything good come out of Nazareth?") as she waits for what is not supposed to happen, the consequence of her unwed pregnancy.

When the angel Gabriel says to Mary, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son," she can't imagine what the announcement will mean. We can hear an undertone of uncertainty in her response: "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Mary knows biology; she knows that sex comes before conception. How can this be? Gabriel's announcement opens up a dizzying world of impossibility. Even though she doesn't understand how this news can be true, even though she can't imagine a baby in her womb, even though she doesn't know how to prepare for the birth of the Messiah, Mary trusts the word of God's messenger: "Let it be with me according to your word."

Like Mary, we trust God's announcement, we live by faith in God's grace, a grace that comes to us as an unpredictable gift, regardless of our preparations and expectations, regardless of our plans for the future, regardless of our sacred assumptions for where and when and how God is supposed to show up. During Advent, we relearn how to wait for a gift we don't know how to receive, a guest for whom we know not how to prepare, a savior who arrives in an unexpected place: the uterus of a young, poor, unprepared and frightened girl.

God's presence in the world is utter gift, a gift of grace that unsettles our certainty, disturbs our sense of propriety and opens us to a world alive with new and strange possibilities—disruptive possibilities, perhaps, because they seem like our undoing, because we find them unimaginable, because they seem unnatural: God in human flesh?

"For nothing will be impossible with God," the angel says. And with Mary we pray, for ourselves, for our church: "Let it be done." TM

Saint John

Erwin Mirabel was barely 20 years old when, in the late 1980s, he attended a seminar in Salazar de las Palmas, Colombia, led by Mennonite theologian and teacher John Driver. Although the young Venezuelan understood almost nothing about Anabaptist theology at the time, he returned from the workshop to his home on Isla Margarita, off the coast of Venezuela, eager to learn more.

In the years that followed, Mirabel gathered regularly with a group of other earnest Christians to explore more deeply what it meant to be a church rooted in community and committed to following Jesus in daily life. Gradually, four congregations emerged, all of them oriented around this vision, and in 2009 the congregations formally organized as the Iglesias Evangelicas Menonitas del Oriente.

Recently, when Peter Stucky, a gifted leader in the Colombian Mennonite Church, responded to a request from Mirabel to provide some teaching for the new Mennonite congregations on Isla Margarita, he discovered to his surprise that the group had formed a small bible school, the John Driver Seminary.

Though his work may not be as well-known among Mennonites in North America, few individuals have been more influential in the spread of Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and practice in Spanish-speaking countries than John Driver. For more than 60 years, beginning with a Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Puerto Rico in 1945, John and Bonnie, his wife, have taught and embodied a life of radical Christian discipleship oriented around Anabaptist themes that has quietly borne abundant fruit.

From 1967 to 1974, John served as a teacher at the Inter-Mennonite Seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay, where he gently challenged a generation of young Christians—many of whom were ready to respond to injustice with revolutionary violence—to consider the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. During the following decade, John and Bonnie lived mostly in Spain, offering encouragement and theological support to a wide range of evangelical and Pentecostal communities who were committed to care for the poor and the marginalized. For the last 20 years of his active ministry, John taught in various classroom settings—especially at SEMILLA, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary in Guatemala City—while also leading countless workshops, Bible studies and seminars on topics such as church history, community, peacemaking, missions and the atonement. He also published more than a dozen books, mostly in Spanish, whose impact on Latin American Christians well beyond Mennonite circles is incalculable.

The central theme of John's writing and teaching has always been the good news of the gospel as revealed to those who are poor, weak, marginalized or oppressed. In violent settings, John has courageously articulated a gospel of peace, service and reconciliation. In countries dominated by the institutional church or highly individualistic renewal movements, his teaching on the Christian community as a committed, caring fellowship of believers has been received as good news. Perhaps more than anything, the success of John's ministry has been grounded in the integrity of his personal character—a steadfast life of simplicity, generosity, gentleness and humility, and an evident love for all God's people that has given visible testimony to the radical message of his teaching.

Clearly, one small seed planted by that teaching more than 25 years ago transformed the life of Erwin Mirabel and the witness of the congregations that have emerged on Isla Margarita. It is fitting—given John's lifelong practice of teaching from the periphery—that the seminary that now bears his name is a small school, located on a tiny island. But no one should be surprised if its impact turns out to have profound and far-reaching consequences.

Unlike many other Christian traditions, Mennonites have generally not honored individuals as "saints." To be sure, some groups tell stories of Anabaptist martyrs, but a deeply embedded emphasis on humility and our strong Christocentric focus have made Mennonites hesitant to elevate individuals for special notice. Moreover, those, like John, who are most worthy of honor are almost always the most reluctant to acknowledge or accept it. But I can think of no other person who better embodies the late-20th-century transformation of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition from a church located in Europe and North America to a movement that is now leavening the Global South. If it were permissible to nominate someone in our tradition for sainthood, I would propose John Driver. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Few individuals have been more influential in the spread of Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and practice in Spanish-speaking countries than John Driver.

Should students grade teachers?

Schools and teachers have been under scrutiny, pressured to produce higher test scores among their students. Besides producing higher stress among teachers and students, results haven't been that great.

A more recent emphasis has been on evaluating teachers, since it's often observed that good teachers help produce the best students. But how best to evaluate teachers and find ways for them to improve?

An article in the October issue of *The Atlantic* describes a new approach that looks promising. In "Why Kids Should Grade Teachers," Amanda Ripley looks at a survey being tried by school officials in a handful of cities.

The idea seems so simple and obvious, it's a wonder it hasn't been tried earlier: Ask students to evaluate teachers. Some teachers may cringe at first at such a suggestion, but research has shown, Ripley writes, that "if you asked kids the right questions, they could identify, with uncanny accuracy, their most—and least—effective teachers."

This approach is much better than the reliance on test scores, as in No Child Left Behind. While "test scores can reveal when kids are not learning," Ripley writes, "they can't reveal *why*. They might make teachers relax or despair—but they can't help teachers improve."

The origin of this approach goes back a decade to a Harvard economist named Ronald Ferguson, who went to a small school district in Ohio to figure out why black kids did worse on tests than white kids. Eventually he gave the kids a survey that wasn't about their entire school but about their specific classrooms. "The same group of kids answered differently from one classroom to the next," Ripley writes, "but the differences didn't have as much to do with race as he'd expected; in fact, black students and white students largely agreed."

The difference was in the teachers. "In one classroom, the kids said they worked hard, paid attention and corrected their mistakes; they liked being there, and they believed that the teacher cared about them," Ripley writes. "In the next classroom, the very same kids reported that the teacher had trouble explaining things and didn't notice when students failed to understand a lesson."

Some years later, after the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched a massive project to study 3,000 teachers in seven cities and learn what made effective or ineffective teachers, Thomas Kane, a colleague of Ferguson's, decided to include student perceptions.

The responses helped predict which classes would have the most test-score improvement at the end of the year. Ripley writes: "In math, for example, the teachers rated most highly by students delivered the equivalent of about six more months of learning than teachers with the lowest ratings."

Students are better at evaluating teachers not because they're smarter but because they've had months to form an opinion, as opposed to 30 minutes, as is the case with many evaluations. And there are more of them—dozens, as opposed to a single principal.

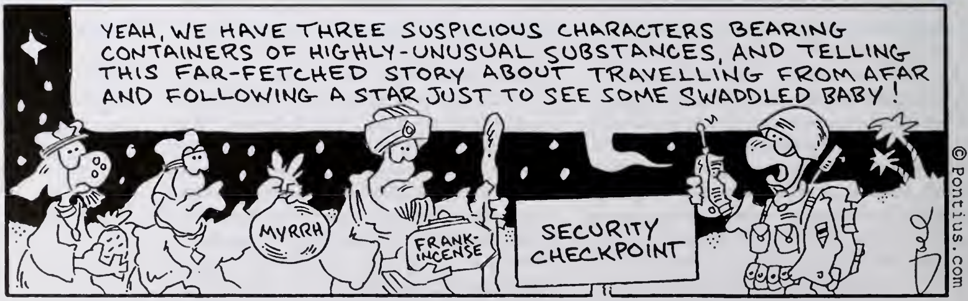
The surveys do not ask, Do you like your teacher? Instead, they ask what students saw. Teachers learned that what mattered most was having control over the classroom and making it a challenging place.

This evaluation is not only more effective, it's less expensive. The shorter version of the survey, used in the Gates study, is available for public use and costs less than $5 per student to implement. Employing professionals to watch classes and give teachers feedback multiple times a year costs about $97 per student.

Ripley interviewed a high school student who took part in a survey. She said, "Everybody knows the good teachers from the ones who don't really want to be in the job." We just need to ask them.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


YEAH, WE HAVE THREE SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS BEARING CONTAINERS OF HIGHLY-UNUSUAL SUBSTANCES, AND TELLING THIS FAR-FETCHED STORY ABOUT TRAVELLING FROM AFAR AND FOLLOWING A STAR JUST TO SEE SOME SWADDLED BABY!
MYRRH
FRANK-INCENSE
SECURITY CHECKPOINT
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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “When we view our homes as personal spaces that are simultaneously crucial to God’s work in the world, we discover many opportunities to create a place for healing, personal transformation and community-building.”
>
> —Christine D. Pohl in *Living in Community: Cultivating Christian Practices That Sustain Us*

Peace in Palestine desired

In the *Jerusalem Post*, Gershon Baskin says the common view among Israelis is that Palestinians don’t want peace with Israel and that Palestinians want to kill Israelis and take their land—and so there is no hope for peace. Baskin, who spends much time in the West Bank, including the volatile city of Hebron, sees a different reality. He is treated with respect as an Israeli Jew. “I cross borders, go beyond walls, break down barriers and refuse to allow fear of ‘the other’ to turn into hatred,” he said in the Sept. 11 issue. One Palestinian security official told Baskin the problem is that Palestinians no longer have contact with Israelis, owing to the separation wall. Baskin believes that both Israelis and Palestinians want peace, in spite of hopelessness.—*Christian Century*

Guns galore

Despite the fact that President Obama has done virtually nothing to restrict firearms, the National Rifle Association and the firearms industry warn that Obama will take guns away from law-abiding citizens. The message is good for business. Last year, the firearms industry had an overall economic impact of $31.8 billion. Employment is up in the industry 31 percent since 2008. Remington alone sold more than 1 million guns and 2 billion rounds of ammunition in 2011, its third most profitable year in the last two decades—outdone only by the two previous years. The NRA has said that a second term for Obama would result in an all-out war on Second Amendment rights. However, the Brady Center, which lobbies for gun control, has given Obama an F on efforts to control guns.—*Christian Century*

Anti-Semitic incidents in the United States dropped by **13 percent** in 2011, according to a report by the Anti-Defamation League, which tracks assaults and other attacks on Jews.
—*Religion News Service*

Pope marks 50th anniversary of Vatican II with warnings

Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 11 urged Catholics to confront the spiritual “desert” of today’s secularized world and rediscover “the truth and beauty of the faith.” Benedict celebrated a solemn Mass in St. Peter’s Square to mark the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, a worldwide gathering of Catholic bishops that revolutionized the church’s stance toward the modern world and to other religions.
—*Religion News Service*

The 1%

The richest **1%** of American households owned **34.5%** of the nation’s net worth in 2010. The poorest **50%** owned **1%**.

The residents of one country—the United States—consume **80%** of all opiod-based painkillers (OxyContin, morphine, methadone, etc.) worldwide.

1% of mobile Internet users eat up **50%** of all wireless bandwidth.—*Pacific Standard*

A grade-threatening diversion

A research team led by Jomon Aliyas Paul of Georgia’s Kennesaw State University surveyed 340 business students and reported two related results: time spent on online social networks lowers academic performance, and the more time a student spends on such networks, the shorter the student’s attention span.—*Pacific Standard*

Internet data centers consume electricity

The huge Internet data centers that store and process everything from old emails to Facebook data and Google searches use about 30 billion watts of electricity worldwide—equivalent to the output of 30 nuclear power plants. Only about 10 percent of that energy powers actual computations; the rest keeps servers running around the clock, so as to avoid any slowdowns that would annoy users.—*New York Times*

Sleepless in the United States

Thanks in part to the pinging and ringing of our digital devices, roughly 41 million people in the United States—nearly a third of all working adults—get six hours or less of sleep a night, according to a new study.—*New York Times*

Good Samaritan

Passengers on a bus in Winnipeg, Manitoba, were stunned one cool morning early in the fall when their driver stopped the bus, got out and called to a man who was walking on the sidewalk without shoes. The driver gave the man his own shoes. A passenger later asked him why he had done that. “I couldn’t stand seeing someone walking barefoot in … temperature like this,” the bus driver said.—*Christian Century*

We proclaim **hope** in the midst of hopelessness.

The ironies of Advent

By Jane Hoober Peifer

The Advent and Christmas season in our culture is the strangest thing. On the one hand, we are celebrating, partying and doing happy things: television specials and Christmas card images—fun parties at work, at home and at school—wonderful carols of the season that play 24/7 on our favorite radio stations. ▶

We see and hear happy people gathered around beautifully decorated Christmas trees in living rooms warmed with a fire in the fireplace. They are singing together or playing games or giving each other gifts. Their feelings of joy and celebration for the gifts of the season and each other are palpable. Their faces are free and happy—not a burdensome expression among them.

This season of celebration and joy is evident even in just taking an evening drive around town. Beautiful lights decorate homes and businesses and lawns and trees. If alien visitors happened to stop by our planet this time of year, they would certainly conclude that these are a grateful and happy people.

On the other hand, many folks are highly stressed, strung out and depressed.

The irony of this happy hoopla is that I'm guessing at least half of those who have decorated their houses and yards and trees and have bought their gifts and baked their cookies do so while complaining. They don't do these special things because they are grateful or joyful at all. They do these things while complaining about the unrealistic expectations of family members, the pressure they feel to keep up with the neighbors or the Christmas lights that never did work right.

We complain about the work of it all, the stress of it all and the cost of it all. Somehow the pictures of happy families and horse-drawn sleighs, the music, the lights and cookies and gatherings don't actually make us all that happy and grateful. In fact, too often the season and its trimmings do the opposite for us. How ironic!

Henri Nouwen wrote: "Celebrating means the affirmation of the present, which becomes fully possible only by remembering the past and expecting more to come in the future. But celebrating in this sense seldom takes place. Nothing is as difficult as really accepting one's own life. More often than not, the present is denied, the past becomes a source of complaints and the future is looked upon as a reason for despair or apathy."

Given this definition of celebration, Psalm 126 reflects people who are truly celebrating. We hear shouts of gratitude and celebration from the children of God as they have been returned from exile, brought back again to their Jerusalem home. Listen to the Psalmist who describes the feeling: "It seemed like a dream, too good to be true, when God returned Zion's exiles. We laughed, we sang, we couldn't believe our good fortune. We were the talk of the nations—other peoples said of us, God was wonderful to them. And indeed—God was wonderful to us. We are one happy people."

This is the witness of a people whose very lives were destroyed as they were conquered and sent into exile.

What we hear in Psalm 126 is the overwhelming joy and celebration of being released from exile—of coming back home. The people knew this was God's doing. Indeed, God had done great things for them. And with grateful hearts, they anticipated more of the same in the future, which we hear reflected at the end of the psalm as they pray that God will always be there to make sure "those who sow in tears will reap songs of joy."

Advent is actually more about being honest about the hard stuff in life than it is about smearing smiles and celebrations over the top of our despair, hoping it will make us feel better.

Remember a time in your life when you were overwhelmed with some good news—some good fortune. Something wonderful happened to you, something you were even scared to wish for initially, but then it happened, and you said, "It seemed like a dream, too good to be true. I laughed, I sang, I couldn't believe my good fortune." Hold that memory and the feelings of celebration, of gratefulness and joy that it brought you. Hold it as gift and as encouragement. Hold it as a time when hope was strengthened in you, so you can also be honest about the many times when life is really hard. Our culture has gotten it all wrong. Advent is actually more about being honest about the hard stuff in life than it is about smearing smiles and celebrations over the top of our despair, hoping it will make us feel better.

In most Advent texts, we hear God's people crying for God to come down and do something. Their lives were miserable. They were in need of redemption. They knew they had made a mess of themselves and their covenant with God, and they were at the end of themselves and their resources, and we hear their cries for God to come down and save them.

There are times when we get in touch with that kind of desperate feeling, but if this has never ▶

been our personal experience, we can easily get caught up in the mixed-up messages of the season around us. It is good to stop and acknowledge (rather than just string up more lights) that just because Christmas is coming doesn't mean cancer is leaving, that the wars are over and the soldiers are all coming home, that jobs suddenly appear for the scores of unemployed among us or that tensions between us disappear. As we so well know, the birth of Jesus doesn't keep teenagers from being killed on the highway or gunmen from walking onto a college campus and randomly shooting. The birth of Jesus doesn't keep grown-up adults from hurting children or greedy executives from ignoring the poverty in our country.

None of these things goes away just because Jesus is coming. Advent is about being honest about that.

In this in-between time of waiting for the return of Christ, we are the voices crying out in the wilderness.

"O that you would come down and save us, O God" is the real sentiment of Advent, rather than, "Maybe if we pretend that we are happy people, we will be, and all this evil and suffering will go away for a few weeks. Or maybe if we buy this and that we will be able to feel like the people in the commercials."

Especially during this time of Advent, especially during this time of celebrating the coming of Jesus into our world, we must hold in our hearts and minds the reality that this world desperately needs saving. We must hold in our hearts and minds the reality that we desperately need to be saved. O that you would come and save us, O God.

The real gift we've been given is that we hold in our hearts and minds and voices the promise of God that we've come to trust—the promise that someday all tears will be dried, all suffering will cease and evil will no longer have its way. When we are honest about the realities of life now and remember that we already are being saved little by little, then we have something to celebrate. Because of the hope introduced to us most fully at this time of year (in the birth of Jesus), we look forward in expectation to the time when good will triumph over all evil once and for all, which is really worth celebrating.

So in this in-between time of waiting for the return of Christ, we are the voices crying out in the wilderness. We are the ones called to prepare the way for God's reign. We are the ones who need to declare that there is hope beyond what we can see, that there is hope in the face of hopelessness, there is peace in the midst of conflict, there is joy in the mire of apathy and forgiveness in the midst of hateful acts of violence. We are the ones who need to be singing and preaching and living as if it is true, because it is, even if, even when we cannot see it around us right now.

As you hold on to the memory of the time you knew that God had done a great thing for you, you embody hope for this world. We are the ones who hold the treasure of knowing God's goodness in the face of all that is evil and awful in our world. We are the ones who are willing to wait in hope for the redemption of this world. We are the ones who cry out, "O God, that you would come down and save us." The world shifted when God came down to be one with us, and so each year we remember that amazing story, which gives us courage and hope for the journey.

Catch yourself if you start your Christmas complaining. Stop and remember the time when you were overwhelmed with the goodness of God. Allow that memory to give you hope in your present reality, expecting again that God will come to save us in the future. And may you be filled with the fullness of God's Spirit while you wait, which just might make you want to hang out more Christmas lights and bake another batch of cookies for the neighbors.

Jane Hoober Peifer is pastor of Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. This article is adapted from a sermon she gave on Dec. 11, 2011.

QUESTIONS TO women leaders

Kim Vu Friesen served on Mennonite Central Committee Central States board, MCC U.S. board, MCC binational board and the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board. Currently she serves on Mennonite Church USA Leadership Discernment Committee.

Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?

My mentors were a missionary couple in Vietnam, Rev. and Mrs. Paul Contento, who worked among us high school and college students. They taught us Scriptures and gave us leadership opportunities. I did not have a woman leader as a mentor, yet I appreciate women leaders who displayed skills that served as models to me throughout my adult life.

Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?

In years past, I had opportunities to train and encourage youth in the Taiwanese and the Vietnamese churches toward serving in leadership roles. Most of those relationships were not formal mentorships but more through Bible studies, fellowship, counseling and friendship. Currently I seek out and enjoy opportunities to talk with young women in affirming their gifts and talents to be potential church leaders.

If so, how is their experience the same/different from yours?

I see similarities in that just as I was affirmed in my gifts and taught to follow God's nudging to serve in leadership roles. Younger women whom I have befriended and tapped on their shoulders had stepped up and followed God's call to serve as women pastors and church leaders.

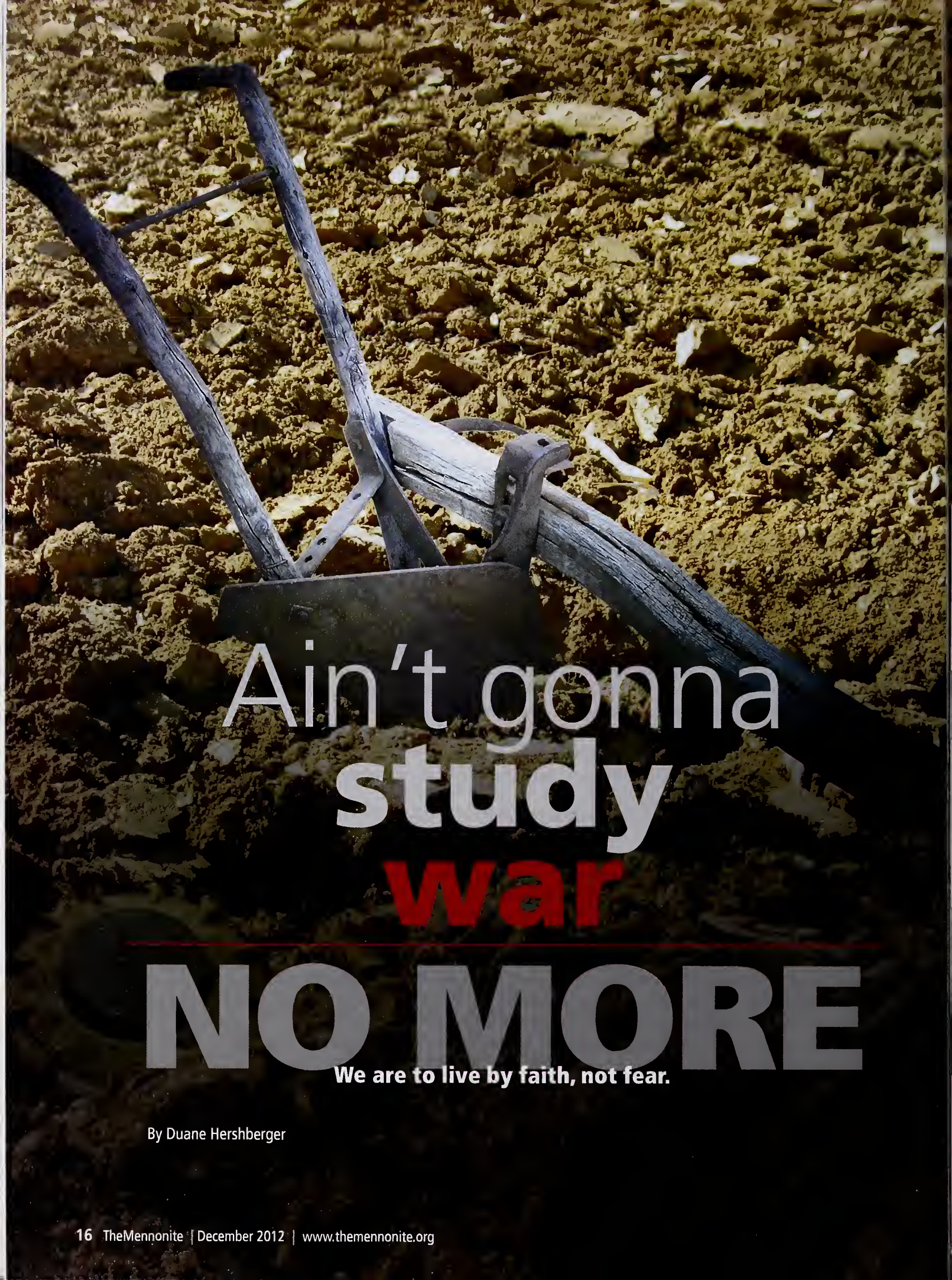
What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?

In the 1980s, during my years serving in leadership roles in Taiwan, I found it awkward to be the only one or one of two women serving in boards predominantly made up of males. In more recent years, I found myself facing a big learning curve as one who needed to familiarize myself with the complex organizational structures of the church, as well as a person of color trying to navigate my way in predominantly white/majority boards with the dominant culture's ways of decision making and doing board business.

When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?

When faced with challenges, I am encouraged by affirmations and by the kindness and patience from those who helped orient me and answered my questions. I am reminded that Jesus' body consists of people from all tribes and nations as described in Revelation 5:9-10. Jesus is building and equipping his body, and I want to contribute and help accomplish his purpose.

Jesus' body consists of people from all tribes and nations as described in Revelation 5:9-10.
—Kim Vu Friesen



Ain't gonna study war NO MORE

We are to live by faith, not fear.

By Duane Hershberger

I used to hear this little jingle during the 1964 presidential election: "In your heart you know he's right, A-U-H-2-0." Barry Goldwater ran against Lyndon Johnson. Conservatives generally supported Goldwater. He appealed to a murky, inner voice that shouted fears of a nuclear bomb attack, Communism and the new era that began Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, when President Kennedy was assassinated.

Even a little kid felt uneasy. Storms around the world threatened our peace and quiet. They told us the Communists could take over Vietnam. Then they'd take over Laos and Cambodia. On to the Philippines, Japan, India, Africa, Turkey, Europe. They'd leap at us from the east and they'd leap at us from the west and take over America. If we didn't stop them in Vietnam, they'd soon be in Virginia. School kids girded up their loins for the leaping by crawling under their desks.

Kings and generals peddle fear to get people to fight their wars. Some people buy it. Some voters' murky, inner fears hummed Goldwater's little jingle, and he got votes. Others were skeptical, so they voted for Johnson, and he won the election. But the war grew and grew until 50,000 Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese died to keep the Communists and their leaping ways out of Virginia.

People in our church taught a Christian discipline called nonresistance. We wouldn't go to war. We wouldn't sue someone because of a bad debt. If someone hit you, you were supposed to turn the other cheek. The discipline is based on multiple biblical teachings to love your neighbors as yourselves, return good for evil and, "Thou shalt not kill."

But lots of nonresistant, turn-the-other-cheek, plain Mennonite grownups were sympathetic to Goldwater and later with Nixon and wars on Communism. Kind words were even said about George Wallace, the famous segregationist governor who vowed to keep black people out of the University of Alabama in 1963. Conversations around lunch tables after church were often about the threats of Communists, hippies, the Black Panthers, riots, revolution and unease that something stable was slipping away.

It slipped away. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968. The Beatles, Kent State, Robert Kennedy's assassination and Woodstock happened. In 1968, many young people voted no on grownups and war. But politicians toss vast hunks of red meat to people's murky, inner fears and win elections. Inner fears didn't go hungry during the 1960s. Young people lost the 1968 election.

You can get otherwise reasonable people to believe boatloads of nonsense if you make them afraid.

Sunday school teachers and major league preachers told us that the opposite of faith is unbelief. But when you think about it, there is no such thing as unbelief. Everyone believes something. Unbelief is just the label for people who don't believe what you believe. Calling it unbelief makes it sound sinister, and sinister begets fear.

The opposite of faith is fear—fear fed by the murky, inner voice that rings alarms about undocumented immigrants, Muslim terrorists, government takeovers of this and that, gay people, growing influence of minorities and declining churches. You can get otherwise reasonable people to believe boatloads of nonsense if you make them afraid.

A whole passel of religious people lives more by fear than faith. Kings, generals and presidents are slick at grabbing those murky, inner fears, wrapping them up in religious packages, then pushing them to voters like candy to a big-eyed kid with a sweet tooth. Plain Mennonite people in bonnets and beards eat it up as much as anyone. Adolph Hitler used church language as cover to kill Jews, ▶

gypsies, homosexuals and lots of other people whom well-intentioned church people quietly distrusted. His soldiers went to Poland, France and Auschwitz with the words, "Gott Mit Uns" engraved on their belt buckles. That's German for "God With Us" or "Emmanuel," as in "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."

And we must fight the things we're afraid of, right? We must fight Communists because they might leap into Virginia. We must fight long-haired, British rock singers who wanna hold your hand because lots of people holding hands might lead to anarchy. We must fight to keep the blacks and whites separated because who knows what would happen if black people went to the university. Someday they might run a bank, and Lord only knows what could happen then. And so on. Feed those fears.

Kings and generals sit in their great houses and tell you war is about a grand cause. Millions of people in their small houses get rah-rahed up for the grand cause and march into battle. For the motherland. For freedom. To turn back evildoers. Kings and generals, with straight faces, will even tell you the grand war cause is peace.

Think about what we would've missed with an ill-timed thunking of the Apostle Paul the next time you hear someone rant about killing off all the evildoers.

But killing is personal. Its between you and the other guy. You have a gun and the other guy has a gun. He has a grand cause, you have a grand cause. One of you will die for the grand cause, but the killing is personal. Suppose the other guy isn't a Christian. Kill him and score a run for your grand cause. But you took away every future opportunity for the other guy to receive God's grace and become a disciple. And if you believe in a hell, you just sent him there permanently. What would you say to God if God asks you why you killed the guy when God was still speaking to him, drawing him into his love, perhaps preparing him for a great work? He did that with the Apostle Paul. Are you smart enough to answer God? Or, suppose the other guy is a Christian. What would you say if God asks you why you killed someone he gave life to and loved enough to die for? Are you smart enough to answer God?

You took way too much time to think about what you might say to God, so the other guy shoots you and you die. You are immediately in God's eternal presence. The God who looks after the lilies and the sparrows will take care of the things left behind like your family and the grand cause. And the other guy has time left on his clock to repent and become bathed in God's love. Brutal as it sounds, that's how it shakes out. I'd hate to be in the other guy's shoes when God stares him down and asks hard questions about that gunshot, but that's not my problem anymore. This all goes against the way we usually think, but that's because our brains have a problem.

Here's the problem. Start with the Apostle Paul, a self-proclaimed terrorist who killed Christians because he was afraid they'd spoil the Jewish religion and way of life. Suppose an overzealous disciple picked up a rock and thunked him on the head the day before he set out for Damascus and met Jesus? The disciple goes home, happy that he eliminated an evil-doing, terrorist threat. The grand cause scored a run.

But thank God Paul lived long enough to tell us in his Romans letter that the key to faithful living is to change our thinking with a big attitude adjustment. Paul calls it a mind transformation. "Be transformed by renewing your mind," Paul wrote some years after he wasn't thunked. A mind with the inner, murky fear is the old way of living. Thinking with a transformed, faith-focused mind is the new way of living. Think about what we would've missed with an ill-timed thunking of the Apostle Paul the next time you hear someone rant about killing off all the evildoers.

Fearful people almost bask in the threats. "Did you hear about the Muslim who … ?" "Did you hear about the Mexican gang in Los Angeles that … ?" "Did you hear about the kid who tried to pray in school … ?" "Did you hear … ?" And so on. And so on. Fearful people build walls and wage war.

Faithful people build schools, communities and roads, even in their enemy's motherland. Faithful people build medical clinics for someone who speaks another language. Faithful people show hospitality to an adversary. Faithful people pick up a sword and beat it into a plowshare. Faithful people give a soft answer to turn away wrath. Faithful people do good to their enemies and, in so doing, heap coals of fire on their enemies' heads. Paul said that, too. Faithful people act like they have eternal life and don't need to squeeze every last beat out of their heart muscle. Faithful people even speak out like prophets when their brothers and sisters pay too much attention to those murky, inner fears.

Instead of trying to persuade other people to start believing in Jesus, we Christians should start believing Jesus. Jesus said to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Sometimes that's easy and sometimes it's hard. When it's easy, you can do good all by yourself. But when it's hard, you need faith. When it's hard, you can do unto others as you would have them do to you only when you follow the North Star of a faith that calls you to a higher, better place of goodness. Pay attention to that murky, inner-fear voice and you just hit back and thunk over and over. And what do you say to God then?

Jesus said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled." Jesus said, "Don't worry about food and clothes because your Father will take care of you." Jesus said, "Don't be afraid of the one who can kill your body; be afraid of the one who tries to take your soul." Politicians push fear of Communism or terrorism to trade your soul for a vote to keep them in power. Even in church pews, the boatloads of fear nonsense goes on. Bless us with better BS detectors, dear God.

Most world religions have peace, consideration for others and respect for our brothers and sisters as their core belief. Look at the core beliefs of Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Muslims. Peace, consideration for others and respect for our brothers and sisters is right at the center. Their core beliefs are about giving your time, talents and treasure to make this world a better place. Jesus was quoting well-known sayings from other religions when he said the words "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Each of those religions also has its fringe of fear-minded people and the monuments they leave that soil their faith heritage. Those monuments include the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the New York Twin Towers, the Oklahoma City Federal Building, Oscar Romero's tombstone, the Mumbai hotel and on and on.

Christians have peace, consideration for others and respect for our brothers and sisters as core beliefs. In fact, we have not only the belief, but the unique, living example of the Word from God, a child from heaven who grew up as one of us. Jesus was guided by the North Star of heaven's truth about profound love. When he was challenged on it, he stood rooted on that North Star path. People who listened to their murky, inner fears instead of looking up to the North Star of their salvation pounded nails in his hands and hung him on a cross. But that wasn't the story's end. Fear's triumph lasted three days. Faith and resurrection own every other day of history.

If any religion has an antidote—the steroids, hormones, hydrotherapy, ear plugs or whatever—to quiet the murky, inner-fear voice, it's Christianity. You'd think we'd sit in our churches, look at the pictures of Christ healing the sick, Christ leading the lost sheep, Christ on the cross and Christ rising from the tomb and be the most courageous people in the world.

Fear's triumph lasted three days. Faith and resurrection own every other day of history.

You'd think we'd sing such songs as "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, a Bulwark Never Failing" and "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine" and "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" and "How Firm a Foundation" and "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost and now am found, was blind but now I see" and believe these profound truths and live joyful, courageous lives.

This is us. Love prevails. Because of the resurrection we lift all our time, talents and treasure to the cross. We joyfully give our bodies and lives completely to the cause of bringing God's kingdom to earth. Christ is alive. Even death won't stop the North Star of God's love and light from shining its bright shine. There's nothing to be afraid of. Nothing. We are those courageous people only when God transforms our minds.

Forgive us, dear Lord, for "Gott Mitt Uns." Forgive us the wars we fight. Forgive us for paying attention to that murky, inner-fear voice. Lift our eyes today and guide us, like the Wise Men of old to the place where Jesus lives.

Duane Hershberger works with Habitat for Humanity and has helped pastor several Mennonite churches. He worships at Germantown Mennonite Church in Philadelphia.

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We are to live by faith, not fear.

Where is your HEART?

By Don Clymer

When I proposed a plan for investing the hypothetical $1 million he would receive, Antonio (name in the story changed for anonymity) said without hesitation, "Oh, no, I couldn't do that." ▶

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.—Matthew 6:21

I was surprised he brought up the subject because money was seldom a topic of conversation for us. Especially one about winning the lottery or being the recipient of someone's generosity.

"If I didn't give the entire million away first day I received it," he continued, "it would completely change the relationship I had with my church and with my neighbors. I would be too tempted to use the money on myself and become less dependent on God."

Antonio, a close personal friend from a small, struggling Mennonite congregation in northern Mexico City, and I were having a discussion about his dream of receiving $1 million for one day. He was telling me about the financial struggles of many of the members of his congregation and neighborhood. He was hoping to start a recreational outreach program in his community to give desperate youth an alternative to drugs, gangs and other illicit behavior. With $1 million, he could help different agencies working with youth, establish his own agency, double the amount of medical caravans he could be involved in each year, and help the many needy people with whom he had contact.

I had what I thought was a superior plan for that $1 million and decided to challenge his plan with what I thought would make him a better steward. "In my country," I said, "my financial advisors would tell me give half the money away, as you propose, but then invest the rest so that the other half could keep on giving for many years." It was after I identified this U.S. perspective on financial accountability that he responded as he did.

"I would be too tempted to use the money on myself and become less dependent on God," he said with conviction. Not only would he become less dependent on God, but he sensed, probably correctly, that having that extra money at his disposal would change his relationship with his neighbors.

Antonio lived his life for service to others in the name of Jesus and not for accumulating for himself "treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19). He divided his normal days (although it could be argued there were no normal days in his life) between his family business and his dental practice. His family business consisted of making specialty soaps in the garage of his house. He spent time during the morning overseeing this business, providing jobs for unemployable neighbors and family members. In the afternoons, he saw patients at his dental practice, which was housed several blocks away in the home of his mother. One would think a dentist earned enough money that no supplemental income would be needed. But Antonio is not your typical dentist. He sees many patients who cannot afford dental work. He does their care for a minimal fee or for free. His dentist's office is lined with before-and-after pictures of numerous children with extreme orthodontic issues, fixed by his handiwork. Many of these children were picked on in school and on the street because of their teeth. Few could afford the price of normal dental services, let alone the usually exorbitant costs of these special needs. Antonio's skill and compassion for the poor changed all that.

In spite of my many years of living in Latin America, I was still strongly influenced by my U.S. culture—a culture that too often places more value on money than on relationships with either other people or God.

He used the money from his home business to pay for the supplies he needed to fix the various dental problems that came to his office. In addition, he went on medical mission caravans every other month to some of the most rural parts of Mexico, giving free dental care to the people in the regions he visited. His home business helped finance these trips. He was not interested in accumulating personal wealth; he didn't live in poverty, but he didn't live in luxury either. He followed Jesus' mandate to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20).

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This different perspective on economics with which Antonio challenged me really brought me up short. I had prided myself on having a different perspective on money because of many years spent in Latin America learning from my brothers and sisters there. I thought I had integrated more of their reliance on God's providence. In spite of those formative years, I was still strongly influenced by my U.S. culture—a culture that too often places more value on money than on relationships with other people or God. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Other people and God; Antonio knows where his heart is.

Our bank statements, our retirement accounts and how the stock markets are doing hold far more weight on how we feel about the future than our trust in God.

Our national currency blatantly announces, "In God We Trust." Nearly everyone else in the world recognizes that most Americans trust their greenbacks more than God. We are too often blind to that irony. Our bank statements, our retirement accounts and how the stock markets are doing hold far more weight on how we feel about the future than our trust in God. My own solution to Antonio's dream was half-baked. I wanted to trust God and give away half, but I also wanted to trust that the greenbacks would keep giving for many more years when there is no guarantee that they would—something that the financial meltdown of 2008 proved beyond a doubt. Other people with some hesitation, God with some reservation. Where is my heart?

Our lack of trust in God shows its demonic head in other ways as well. We accumulate "treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal" and go to great length to protect these treasures. "Though we often imagine that the accumulation of worldly goods makes us more secure," writes Scott Bader-Saye in his book *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear,* ". . . such accumulation tends to make us more afraid, since the more we have the more we have to lose." The more we have to lose, the more we spend to protect what we have. From elaborate security systems in our homes to spending more on our military budget than all other countries on earth combined (http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex), we have misplaced our trust. Fear instead of trust in God; trust in what money can do to secure our possessions. Where is our heart?

Not only do we keep accumulating, but we think we deserve, or have earned what we have. "The attitude of entitlement saps us of our ability to give thanks, to receive the goods of life as gifts," writes Bader-Saye. This sense of entitlement blinds us to the true provider of our wealth, and instead of being grateful for these good gifts, we use all means to hoard them and to protect them. We think we are "owners of our property rather than as stewards of God's property." It is no wonder that Jesus warned in Matthew 6:24: "You cannot serve both God and money." Our trust is misplaced. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Antonio, and many other people who live in the developing South, truly show trust in God's providence. They live the slogan "In God We Trust." "Everything that comes their way is a gift from God; they are not burdened by a sense of entitlement," writes Bader-Saye about a group of people he met in Uganda. "[E]ven in the midst of devastating circumstances, they find reason to give God thanks." My own experience in rural villages and working-class neighborhoods of Latin America confirms this trust in God and sense of gratitude. Antonio is an exception because he could have easily chosen to get rich, accumulate possessions and become more "secure" with his dental practice. Instead, he has chosen a life of service to others and trust in God. As such he provides a model for us. We do not have to get caught up in the vicious cycle of accumulation, fear and paranoid protection of our possessions. We can learn from him to trust in God and our relationships with other people for our security.

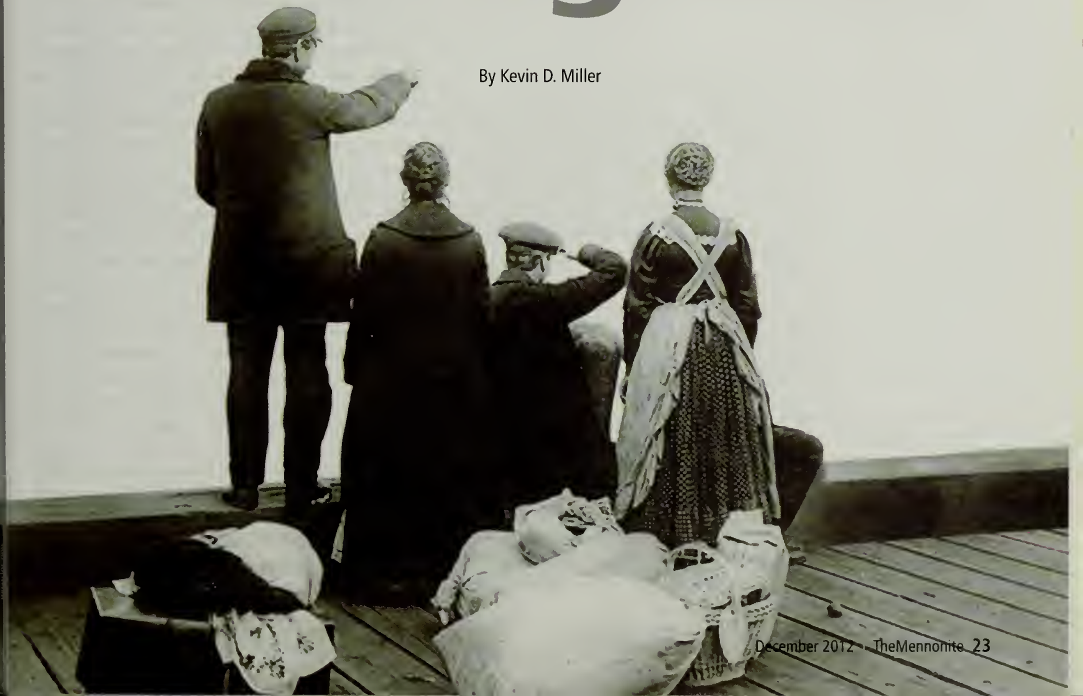
In the end, neither Antonio nor I had to decide what to do with a million dollars and it's unlikely we ever will. Neither he nor I buy lottery tickets or have relatives that could leave us a sizable inheritance. But through our discussion we learned to understand each other better across a cultural divide; something more valuable than the money we were discussing. We became more sure of where our heart is. Where is *your* heart?

Don Clymer teaches Spanish and humanities at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., including leading students on semester-long cross-cultural programs to Guatemala and Mexico. He also serves on the pastoral care team at Lindale Mennonite Church.

How this innocent-sounding expression makes a white guy like me the 'real' American in the room.

Why I've stopped saying 'We are a nation of immigrants'

By Kevin D. Miller



"We are, after all, a nation of immigrants." It's a line I've used as almost a stock answer to individuals putting down Mexican immigrants living in the United States. My good intention in using this rejoinder was to remind the person that everyone living in the United States, with the exception of Native Americans, resides here only because an earlier family member at some point migrated to this land.

Before the Mayflower, there was the White Lion, and before the white Pilgrims there were the black Africans.

But I've stopped using the expression.

As innocuous as it sounds, the "nation of immigrants" line is an abbreviated version of the prevailing narrative of national origins that makes white people like me the norm while making others, well, "others." Without appearing to do so, it subtly shapes my thinking about who is and isn't a true or real American.

I teach at a predominantly white university, so when I introduce my students to the concept of white privilege, we undertake a historical thought experiment. We intentionally view the nation-of-immigrants line through the eyes of the members of the two largest groups of non-European Americans in the United States, African Americans and Latino Americans. Together the 2010 census shows these two groups comprise about 30 percent of the U.S. population.

School children everywhere are taught to celebrate the nation's origins via the Pilgrims, those Puritan separatists from England who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620. But 1620 and the Pilgrims is an arbitrary choice. The year 1619 would make as much sense. That year a ship christened the White Lion set anchor off the coast of Virginia and unloaded 20 shackled males and females—the first slaves ever brought to the English colonies from Africa. Before the Mayflower, there was the White Lion, and before the white Pilgrims there were the black Africans.

A firsthand account of the arrival of that "cargo" on the White Lion survives in a letter written in the fall of 1619 by John Rolfe, the colony's first tobacco planter, who famously married the Indian princess Pocahontas. Using the conventional spelling of the time, he recorded that the White Lion offloaded "20. and odd Negroes, wch the Governor and Cape Marchant bought for victualle (whereof he was in greate need as he pretended) at the best and easyest rate they could." Just four days after the White Lion, a second ship, the Treasurer, also docked at Jamestown and unloaded an additional but unspecified number of newly captured Africans.

Recent historical research gives us new and tantalizing details about the personal lives of these particular enslaved individuals. One was named Angela. The 1624 census lists her as "a Negro woman" who was brought to Jamestown on the Treasurer five years earlier. Angela had been kidnapped from an urban home in Ndongo, a southern kingdom in what is today Angola. Historian Engel Sluiter found that her people spoke a Bantu language, were largely literate, mined rock salt and tar, used shells as a form of money currency, and performed initiation rites to recognize the passage of their youth from childhood to adulthood.

Her people had known Europeans for over 100 years through commerce. They had been Christians for generations, having converted as a nation to that faith already a century prior, in 1490—two years before Christopher Columbus' fateful voyage to America. Given her age, Angela would have already been baptized at the time of her capture. The only other detail we have about Angela is that in Jamestown she was forced to work as a slave for a Capt. William Pierce and his wife in their home—now her new "home," too.

In the years and decades following 1619, as historians John Thorton and Linda Heywood document, a parade of ships arrived to this Virginia port and other ports along the sprouting East Coast colonies, carrying at first hundreds and then thousands of men, women, boys and girls captured in the Ndongo region to be sold for profit in the emerging transatlantic slave trade.

By the end of the Civil War, in 1865, more than 500,000 Africans like Angela had been captured and forcibly transported from their cities and villages in Africa to the mainland of North America. If we include all those Africans forcibly transported to not only North America but also the Caribbean and Central and South America, the numbers swell to at least 12 million—and that figure doesn't include another 2 million African individuals who died on the slave ships during the middle passage en route to the shores of the Americas. These abducted people experienced what sociologists call a "social death." This was the death of the spirit that followed being ripped from their families and cultures and languages. As a father, I cannot imagine being stripped of the ability to manage the welfare of my own children.

Thus, viewed through Angela's experience, the "nation of immigrants" explanation loses its luster. Captain Pierce and the English Pilgrims undertook their migration from England to the "New World" in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. By contrast, Angela and tens of thousands of other unnamed Africans—individuals who may well have also been captains or governors or artists back in Africa—found their voyage across the Ocean meant the loss of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Superficially, William Pierce the master and Angela the slave had much in common: Both had traversed the same ocean, and both had come to dwell in the same house in the same New World settlement. But only Angela's master can be properly said to have immigrated to Virginia from England. Angela was unwillingly abducted and imported to Virginia from her city in Angola.

Personal, family and ethnic identities—like my own European Mennonite one—and the narratives that form them are not inherently bad. In themselves, they are good since they humanize us and give us a sense of identity. The problem is when our narratives are told in such a manner that they erase or ignore or de-center narratives that differ from our own, subtly leaving entire groups of people somehow outside the "true" American experience or the "real" American story.

I find white normative thinking common among my students who have grown up in overwhelmingly white communities and counties in the Midwest. Disavowing racism of any sort, they nevertheless often answer an apparently straightforward question that I ask them of whether a given person is black or not with the reply, "No, she's just American." Similarly, they will state, "I'm just American," when I ask what racial group they belong to. Like my own white mind, theirs have been conditioned to see the standard immigrant narrative as merely factual and not the "myth of origins" that it is—that is, that it is a group-identity story that reflects social and political power arrangements, replete with winners and losers.

Recently my son, a first grader in our local public school district, presented me with his "history" coloring project. It featured the figure of George Washington, who stands officiously behind a lectern bearing the presidential seal. Below the figure of George Washington are these rhyming words: "The Father of our country / You led us on our way. / We honor you, George Washington, / Across the U.S.A. / America's first president, /You served with loyalty. / You helped our people take a stand / And made our nation free."

Through the annexation of Texas in 1845 and the Mexican-American War that same decade, the United States had stolen over half (55 percent) of Mexico's territory.

The ditty references the War of Independence. But imperceptibly missing from the poem—and from my son's education about the founding of the United States—is that the first president who "helped our people" take a stand and "made our nation free" was the white wealthy recipient of the "help" of over 300 imported African human slaves and their descendants who toiled over the years on Washington's plantation in Virginia.

We are a nation of immigrants but also a nation of the forcibly imported. The Latino American experience teaches one more category: We are a nation of the conquered. This is true not only for Native Americans but also for many Latino Americans, particularly Mexican Americans.

I learned this firsthand during a year of Mennonite Voluntary Service work in San Antonio, Texas. I remember the moment. I had asked Mondo, a Hispanic teenager, what I took to be a perfectly logical and innocent question: When did

▶

your ancestors come from Mexico to the United States? He felt affronted by the question. His family, he told me, had always lived in Texas, even before it was part of the United States.

Beneath Wall Street and other nearby blocks in lower Manhattan lie the remains of more than 15,000 enslaved and freed black people buried there but sealed over by high rises and concrete roadways.

I had missed this first potential on-ramp to our eventual friendship because missing from my mental cartography was the fact that through the annexation of Texas in 1845 and the Mexican-American War that same decade, the United States had stolen over half (55 percent) of Mexico's territory. This included Texas, parts of Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado and all of New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and California. By the single stroke of a pen, some 100,000 Mexicans in these territories had become the subjects of the newly expanded U.S. empire. As with Mondo's forbears, these Mexicans were granted immediate legal citizenship in their new country, though they were not treated as citizens by their white conquerors. Aviva Chomsky notes that "lynchings, vigilante justice and land dispossession confirmed the racialized way in which Anglos viewed Mexicans."

The question I had posed to Mondo was logical and innocent—but only if one assumes that "we" are, in fact, "a nation of immigrants." Given the reality that the United States is a nation of European immigrants, African importees and conquered Mexican and Native Americans—my question quickly loses its innocence and logic.

Reporters Trymaine Lee and Janelle Ross describe how this past Christmas a handful of white Occupy Wall Street protesters and a black city council member stood on a sidewalk on Wall Street beneath the looming shadow of a 24-story Citibank office and across from a Verizon Wireless store. One held a placard reading, "New York's first slave market built on this site 1711." The reporters noted that a few blocks from the demonstration stands Federal Hall, an extant structure built by slaves and where George Washington took the oath of office for the presidency.

No plaque or marker, they observed, documents the spot where "free market" economics took its early and sordid form. Adding to the poignancy of the scene is the fact that beneath Wall Street and other nearby blocks in lower Manhattan lie the remains of more than 15,000 enslaved and freed black people buried there but sealed over by high rises and concrete roadways.

Jumaane Williams, the council member, is part of a group petitioning the city to erect a monument on the site of this early stock market, a market that traded not only tobacco and cattle but human "stock" as well.

"This is the area of the city," Lee and Ross write, "where thousands of African slaves were once brought in by ship, offloaded and marched from New York harbor to Wall and Pearl streets, then sold."

They then quote Williams as he stands on the sidewalk overlooking the old slave market: "America and the wealth that it has—all would not exist without slaves. New York City wouldn't be what it is, Wall Street wouldn't be what it is, nothing would be what it is without the role of slaves. Yet we seem to downplay it and not try to address it or give it the respect that it deserves."

Kevin D. Miller is associate professor of communication at Huntington University near Fort Wayne, Ind.

Suggested reading from authors cited

"They Take Our Jobs!: and 20 Other Myths About Immigration" by Aviva Chomsky (Beacon Press, 2007).

"Mystery of Va.'s First Slaves Is Unlocked 400 Years Later," *The Washington Post* by Lisa Rein (Sept. 3, 2006, www.washingtonpost.com)

"'Slavery and Justice,' Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice," presented to the president of Brown University in October 2006.

http://brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/report/

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http://www.jstor.org/stable/2953279

One man's refusal to demand repayment from another helped that man be open to receiving Jesus Christ.

Business is BUSINESS

By Simon Schrock

It all began at the Silver Knob sand quarry on a ridge in Western Maryland near the West Virginia state line. There were only a few employees working there in the early days of the business. One of the longtime standby men was Olen; the other was Clayton (called Babe). Both were strong in stature and Garret County men who occasionally went hunting together. ▶

In Olen's dealing with Babe, patience, sympathy and loving kindness took precedence over commonly accepted business practice.

Olen was a Christian in the Amish church. Babe was not a Christian. Babe's speech was on the rough side, with not the best of language at times. And he sometimes told a mild joke about religion, especially Olen's. But he was a good neighbor that could be trusted. His wife was kind and gentle to be with, and his son had a pleasant personality. Visits to their home were enjoyable.

But Babe was not a Christian and not a man of the church. He was a faithful Sunday afternoon ball game fan. Christians witnessed to him about God's love. Numerous conversations and gospel tracts reminded him of the good news of the gospel. It all seemed to be of no avail. He committed to attend a tent revival meeting with Olen, where he heard a live gospel message. But he eased that away with complaints of inconsistencies in the churches.

Later in life, Babe was in a financial bind and needed help. He went to his longtime friend Olen, who agreed to extend him a loan. They agreed on an amount and the expected return time. Time passed by, and Babe paid no money back as agreed in the loan. Neither did he explain why.

Babe was no longer employed at Silver Knob, and things were getting difficult for him. Olen did not put pressure on him to return the borrowed money; neither did he demand that something of value be given from Babe's belongings to cover the interest.

Perhaps he remembered a sad experience from

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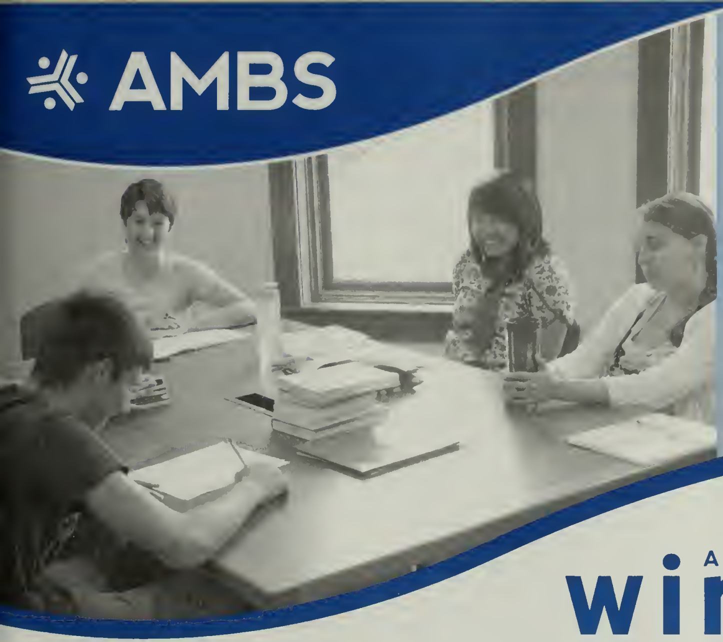


INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 Remembering Anabaptists remembering Scripture

Alumni News

3 Reading the Bible requires reading culture

Your gifts at work

4 President's Window

Fall 2012
Volume 23 Issue 1

AMBS window

Read the Bible—and read it together

Rachel Miller Jacobs, D.Min. candidate, Assistant Professor of Congregational Formation

When I went to seminary, I was amazed by how much I benefited from class experiences of reading New Testament texts together in Greek. Because we'd had to translate every word, we were reading more carefully than when we flipped open our English Bibles. And we were benefiting from what each of us had noticed and especially from the times we'd made different translation choices.

As a pastor, I saw Bible study groups launch into discussion without first reading the text. Leaders told me people knew what was there already, and reading out loud used too much time in a short Sunday school hour. But I couldn't get my experience in class out of my head. How could people in congregations receive some of the same gifts in opening the Bible that seminary students get?

One clue lies in our Anabaptist inheritance: the Bible is best read and interpreted in community. While this was not an innovation, it was and is one of the most important characteristics of an Anabaptist approach to scripture. Reading and interpreting in community implies two obvious and powerful things: first, we have to actually read the Bible. Second, we have to read it together.

So I started reading the Bible with groups in this Anabaptist way. First we read the text out loud, so that we could notice what was actually there—and so that our comments would flow from the text rather than simply our opinions. Then we asked ourselves: what do our particular experiences, our particular knowledge, help each of us see in this text? Together, we weighed our understandings and our hunches about what God was speaking to us through it.

One memorable experience was with junior highers preparing to lead worship. In our study of I Samuel 24, they noticed how vulnerable Saul was, relieving himself in that cave—especially since David and his men, whom Saul had been chasing, were right there in the shadows.

Based on their experiences of junior high bathrooms and the temptations they offer to bullies, the junior highers noticed, and helped the congregation see, how powerful and unusual David's choice was. When you have the upper hand over a bully, it's almost impossible to imagine not taking advantage of it. But David did.

The riches we reap in reading the Bible with people like us are magnified when we read with people who are different from us in race, culture, ethnicity, economic class or language, to name just a few possibilities. An Anglo and two Latino congregations in my hometown decided to read the story of the Good Samaritan together, seating people with folks from their own and other congregations, including interpreters.

Together, they noticed something interesting: in the Spanish Bible, *neighbor* was translated *prójimo*: the one "closest to me." Anglo folks, when they thought of caring for their neighbor, thought about loving people far away—such as sending money to victims of disasters; Latinos thought about loving those closest to them—supporting friends and relatives. Together, these readers recognized that Jesus' invitation to love the neighbor includes both those far away and those closest to hand, a realization that might have been missed without the shared reading. ●

Remembering Anabaptists remembering Scripture

Jamie Pitts, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Anabaptist Studies

Anabaptists have long been suspicious of theology that is divorced from the living community of the church. Frequently this suspicion raises a call to get "back to the Bible," back to the church's shared, authoritative witness to the move of God in history. Today this call resounds again, but can be found among people espousing very different views of what the Bible actually says or recommends.

Reflecting on how valued ancestors, spiritual as well as biological, navigated tumultuous times can remind us of useful strategies we have forgotten. Their struggles and failings can also serve as warning signs, and they may even hold a mirror up to our struggles and failings.

What might we learn from the first generation of European Anabaptists about getting back to the Bible? How might our memories of Anabaptists shape our current approach to Scripture?

Sixteenth-century Anabaptists were, like their Protestant counterparts, committed to the Bible as their sole guide to faith. They made the Bible central to their lives. They prayed, preached, studied, memorized and debated it, discerning their paths in its light.

It is vital that we read these plural pronouns as referring to Anabaptist communities, and not simply to individuals. In the sixteenth century, Anabaptists distinguished themselves by insisting that local communities of devoted Christians were the basic context for biblical interpretation. They trusted that the Bible's meaning was plain enough, and inter-congregational associations united communities in common understanding.

Anabaptists were accused of adopting an overly literal interpretation of Scripture, but they could also be accused of relying too much on the Holy Spirit for understanding. Excesses were committed, but at their best the Anabaptists held together rigorous attention to the texts with patient listening to the Spirit.

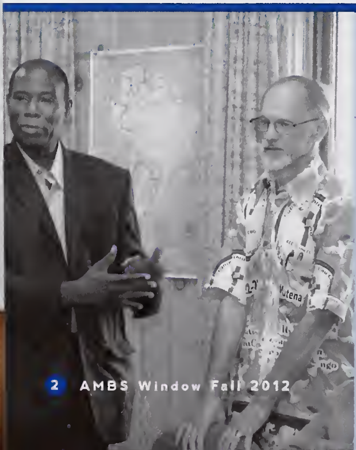
Central to maintaining this balance was the conviction that both text and Spirit were about Jesus Christ. Anabaptists viewed the Bible in its entirety as culminating in the Gospel narratives; this perspective could have deleterious effects on Old Testament interpretation, but also encouraged practical imitation of Christ's life.

In our day, appreciation for context makes sensitivity to interpretive diversity a necessity. This sensitivity, however, sometimes makes it difficult to know how congregations can share any common understandings of Scripture—and this difficulty in turn gives rise to the escape valves of literalism and spiritualism. Those temptations are especially enticing when science and religious pluralism raise questions about the Bible's adequacy.

A naïve appropriation of sixteenth-century Anabaptist approaches to the Bible may, therefore, be undesirable, but aspects of their interpretive praxis speak directly to our situation. At times, and in notable and enduring ways, they achieved communal and inter-communal unity through zealous commitment to Jesus Christ as they learned of him through Scripture and Spirit. That is our challenge. We do well to remember. ●

Top: Jamie Pitts leads a session of Christian Theology I this fall.

Cover: Rachel Miller Jacobs listens as participants in !Explore share the work they have done on their theological questions. Participants include (clockwise from center front) Adam Troyer, Alissa Murray and Clarra Lay. Caitlyn Desjardins (right) is a seminary student who served as an event pastor.



ALUMNI NEWS

When Pastor Siaka Traoré, Vice President of the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission International Central Council and President of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso, visited AMBS, **Rodney Hollinger-Janzen, Master of Divinity 1990,** served as a translator. Pastor Traoré and Pastor Benjamin Mubenga, President of AIMM's International Central Council and President of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Congo, helped to celebrate the release of *The Jesus Tribe: Grace stories from Congo's Mennonites, 1912-2012.* Rodney, James Bertsche and Nancy Myers edited the book (see at right).

Willard Swartley, (Bachelor of Divinity 1962, professor emeritus) is author of *Health, Healing and the Church's Mission: Biblical Perspectives and Moral Priorities* (IVP Academic 2012). One reviewer calls it "sober, mature and constructive treatment of a critical issue."

Reading the Bible requires reading culture

Andy Brubacher Kaethler, Ph.D. candidate, Assistant Professor of Faith Formation and Culture

You can't read the Bible without first reading culture.

This is the conclusion Musimbi Kanyoro arrives at after returning to Kenya from Europe to spend some time with her mother following her father's funeral.

While in Kenya Kanyoro participates in an ecumenical women's Bible study, a profound experience exploring together the Bible's wisdom for their daily lives.

But something disturbs her. Too frequently the village women interpret the Bible in a manner consistent with their village culture but inconsistent with the saving and liberating trajectory of Scripture. For example, one woman wonders if she should allow her teenage daughter to wed a much older man. Another woman fears she will contract AIDS from an adulterous husband.

Shocking to Kanyoro is the way these women justify cultural practices using the Bible. The daughter's marriage is justified by Ruth marrying Boaz (Ruth 4). The actions of the adulterous husband are unchallenged because Jesus addresses only the Samaritan woman (John 8:3-11). How is it that these women, earnestly seeking the guidance of the Bible, assent to practices which could harm the most vulnerable among them?

There are two real dangers in not properly reading both the Bible and culture. Kanyoro describes one danger: absorption. When the Bible is unwittingly conflated with culture, its wisdom becomes indistinguishable from the main tenets of culture, and we mistakenly find affirmation in the Bible for the very practices from which Bible seeks to liberate us.

The other danger is ghettoization: treating the Bible and culture as two separate entities, a move usually to guard the holiness of Scripture.

Absorption and ghettoization each limit and distort the Bible as the living, dynamic Word of God.

Historically, Anabaptists are prone to the second danger. We kept to the edge of society and kept the Bible there with us.

Now we are trying to fit in culturally. But we do not always bring the Bible back with us—at least not the prophetic, liberating parts about the idolatry of nationalism, the diversion of consumption, the false logic of violence and retribution, and the false hope of technology.

Disciples of Jesus are called to be counter-cultural. But this does not mean being anti-cultural.

First, it means practicing cultural hermeneutics—careful interpretation of our contexts. Disciples must observe and name the assumptions and meaning-making systems by which we live our daily lives—the things that don't need explanation because they are "just there."

Second, it means being culturally eccentric (off-centered). Having identified cultural focal points, disciples can now identify how Christian focal points are different:

- allegiance to Jesus the Lamb is a different focal point than allegiance to a powerful nation;
- living simply is a different focal point than amassing wealth;
- reconciliation is different focal point than war and punishment;
- the slow patient work of God in the Incarnation is a different focal point than the speed and "efficiency" of technology.

Living faithfully and fruitfully today requires us to be active readers of both the Bible and culture. ●

Andy Brubacher Kaethler combines teaching seminary students with directing !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth (visit www.ambs.edu/explore). Together with Bob Yoder, he edited Youth ministry at a Crossroads: Tending to the faith formation of Mennonite youth, published in 2011.

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

The Jesus Tribe: Grace stories from Congo's Mennonites, 1912-2012 is the latest release from the Institute of Mennonite Studies at AMBS. In this book, coordinated by Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, Christians in the Congo tell stories of how they encountered Jesus. Pastor Benjamin Mubenga, President of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Congo, signed copies of the book at AMBS, including a copy for student Deborah-Ruth Ferber.

The Anabaptist prayer book, the semi-annual *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*, recent release *Mediation in Pastoral Care* and many other resources from the Institute of Mennonite Studies aim to help pastors, scholars and people involved in the life of the church. Your gifts to AMBS support this ministry, extending seminary materials to Sunday school teachers, pastoral counselors, youth pastors and others at work in the church. ●

Anabaptist Mennonite
Biblical Seminary

AMBS Window
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The purpose of AMBS Window is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

Editor: Mary E. Klassen
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker
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A seminary of
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President's Window

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

There is nothing more important for an Anabaptist seminary than to have a stellar Bible faculty—which AMBS has. But AMBS professors in every discipline know that reading the Bible is central to their work, including the three remarkable new professors featured in this *Window.*

At AMBS we are asking with renewed intrigue—what does it mean to be an Anabaptist seminary? As a learning community with a revitalized Anabaptist identity, we've come to a ringing clarity: we will immerse ourselves in the Bible.

We observe the early Anabaptists' wholehearted love and undivided allegiance to God. In order to know God, they immersed themselves in the Scriptures, in worship and in prayer.

But the Anabaptists didn't stop there. With down-to-earth chutzpah, they obeyed Jesus in radically observable ways and in so doing, became a visible community, an activist "body of Christ" committed to reconciling work in the world.

We see abundant evidence that the early Anabaptists were alive to the Spirit. They courageously witnessed in the courts and public squares. They welcomed the Spirit's guidance for interpreting Scripture together. They exemplified a practical spirituality and a joy-filled discipleship that transformed individuals and entire communities.

For my prayer this morning, I opened *Take Our Moments and Our Days: an Anabaptist Prayer Book* and read these words: "Give heed, my people, to my teaching; I will open my mouth in a parable. The next generation too should arise and tell their children that they too should set their hope in God." This Call to Praise followed: "O God, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path …."

I am blessed by the Scripture-filled prayers and readings from this Anabaptist prayer book—a priceless gift of AMBS faculty to the church.

Many persons long to recover the transforming power of the Bible. The AMBS learning community invites followers of Jesus Christ to practice with us as we read, interpret, preach, pray, sing and dramatically tell the biblical narratives. We delight in the Scripture's enduring ability to reveal God to us. ●

PANORAMA

Spring online courses: 2 options

Two online options are available next spring: for-credit semester courses and non-credit, graduate-level online short courses.

For-credit semester courses: www.ambs.edu/academics/Online-courses.cfm
Register by January 15

- Anabaptist History and Theology, taught by Lois Barrett
- Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture, taught by Loren Johns

Non-credit Anabaptist Short Courses: www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/Anabaptist-short-courses.cfm

- Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology in the 16th Century, taught by Lois Barrett (Feb.–March)
- Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?, taught by Loren Johns (April–May)

Webinars bring resources to you

- **Lent Planning**, Feb. 7 (7:30 p.m.), with Rachel Miller Jacobs
- **Feeding the Spiritual Hungers of Contemporary Christians**, Feb. 20 (2 p.m.) with Marlene Kropf and Dan Shrock
- **Expanding Your Ministry: Getting Started in Group Spiritual Direction**, Feb. 20 (7:30 p.m.), with Marlene Kropf and Dan Schrock
- **Women Leaders: Engaging Race and Gender in the Church**, March 13, with Joanna Shenk, Regina Shands Stoltzfus and Linda Gehman
- **Discerning the Powers: Moral Discernment, Theology and Mission**, May 1, with Jamie Pitts ●

his boyhood days during the Great Depression. His father borrowed money from a church brother to buy the home place from his father. Since it was financially tough for people, Olen's father struggled to make it. When he didn't have the money to pay the interest, the church brother came to the farm and picked a good cow to cover it. After all, business is business, and the interest is due.

Maybe Olen remembered the painful experience of watching one of their beloved cows being led from the barn to cover the interest. Maybe it was a cow he milked by hand and he even knew her name. At any rate, it made it harder to survive the depression while others were losing their farms. In Olen's dealing with Babe, patience, sympathy and loving kindness took precedence over commonly accepted business practice.

Babe became ill and was diagnosed with a serious cancer. He was a patient in the local hospital. The two had not seen each other for some time. Then came the shocking news; Olen was seriously wounded while at work. He came close to losing one arm. He was rushed to the local hospital for medical aid. After several days, the two men discovered each other in the same hospital. They made requests to become roommates. They received permission, and they were pleased to be together.

As days went by, the sound of hymns, gospel songs and messages from God's Word came from Olen's bedside.

Babe knew his days were limited. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit was tugging at his heart. Across the room was Olen, who never mentioned the hundreds of dollars owed to him. Instead, he showed interest in Babe's soul being right with God.

A nurse entered the room, "What's wrong?" she asked.

"I'm all right," Babe said. Trembling and wet with sweat, he called for his friend Olen. "Pray for me, my time is short and I want to be ready to meet the Lord." Babe said he felt this call when he was younger. "I rejected it then. If I don't do it now, I will not have another opportunity."

There, that night, was a prayer meeting, a period of confession and a time of rejoicing. It was a real joy to hear Babe say, "I mean business with the Lord. I want to go all the way." There he gave his heart to God. Then he asked about his unsaved father, if only he could be saved, too. Confessions went on, "I'm sorry about that money, I wasn't trying to avoid you, and I just didn't have it."

Olen said, "Don't worry, that will be taken care of. This is more important."

Sometimes Christians say, "Business is business," and we must use business methods to get what is ours. They rationalize that some scriptural principles do not apply to business. Sometimes, they forget to practice Christian love to others because of business.

There, that night, was a prayer meeting, a period of confession and a time of rejoicing.

Jesus said, "What will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?" (Mark 8:36). May we ask what it profits a person to gain much of this world while others lose their soul?

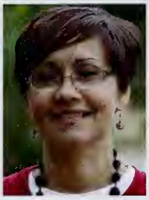
Babe was moved to Ohio to another hospital and then to a relative's house to live out his remaining days. Christians visited him there. In his severe pain, he groaned to express his happiness in the Lord and said, "I am ready to go."

Days later, the message came that he passed on. Our hearts are glad for the salvation of Babe, and Olen said it was worth every bit of money and the badly wounded and broken arm.

We believe the Holy Spirit could work freely, and the angels of heaven rejoiced at the addition of another soul because one Christian didn't insist that "business is business" and we must handle it that way.

Simon Schrock is a member of Faith Christian Fellowship in Catlett, Va.

First impressions and hospitality



Marty Lehman of Goshen, Ind., is director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA.

Recently I received a phone call from a person who had discovered Mennonites via the Mennonite Church USA website (www.mennoniteusa.org). She said she was a Christian and found our beliefs to be consistent with hers. She had used the website to find a congregation in her community, and she began attending. After several weeks, she was discouraged by a particular Sunday school conversation in which there was significant theological questioning. As a result, she stopped attending.

No one from the congregation contacted her when she no longer showed up on Sundays. She told me no one had asked for her contact information. She was disappointed that there were no other Mennonite congregations in her area, since she really wanted to go to a Mennonite church.

I was sad to hear that this congregation had not taken the time to get contact information from a visitor who had attended several weeks. Since she stopped attending, they had no way of contacting her and inviting her back. What a missed opportunity!

> We may have only one opportunity to share a warm, welcoming, Jesus-like experience with visitors who join us for worship.

Several years ago, my brother-in-law and sister-in-law visited churches in their community. I encouraged them to visit a particular congregation that I thought would be "their kind of church." Unfortunately, not one person talked to them during their visit.

Hospitality is a significant part of every congregation's outreach program; how we welcome people into our congregations is a significant part of church growth. Unfortunately, we often don't think of it in this way. Lyle Schaller once said that regular churchgoers imagine that for newcomers to become part of a church is as simple as stepping across a line on the floor—whereas to the visitor, it actually feels like having to scale a 30-foot-high wall.

I am aware of a story from my own congregation—of a family who visited but arrived a little late. As they were going into the sanctuary, the usher "yelled" at them for entering the sanctuary at the wrong time. (The ushers had been instructed to allow people to enter only at certain times so as not to disturb the worshipers.) The visitors were embarrassed about the incident and never returned. (I should also say that my congregation no longer has these "rules" about when you can and can't enter the sanctuary.)

I think many Anglo Mennonite congregations in particular tend to plan worship for their current members. We don't tend to think about the visitors we might have. We assume that everyone knows everyone. When we have visitors, they may quickly feel left out.

With a bit of planning, we can find opportunities to be invitational and show hospitality. A few years ago, I attended a Christmas Eve service. It was a wonderful, meaningful service. In attendance were many members as well as a number of community people. However, I noticed that there was no invitation to join the congregation on Sunday morning for worship. Neither was there information about what time they worshiped on Sundays. There was no offer of pastoral care, should someone have wanted to contact a pastor at a later date. Simply including this information in the service or bulletin could have made a difference for a visitor.

When I worked for Goshen (Ind.) College as the director of admissions, one of the things we frequently talked about was our one opportunity to make a good first impression. The same principles apply in congregational settings. We may have only one opportunity to share a warm, welcoming, Jesus-like experience with visitors who join us for worship. If we fail to do this, likely they will not return.

I leave you with a challenge: Become a visitor in 2013. I invite you to make one of your New Year's resolutions to visit several congregations in your community. Be aware of your visitor status and how the congregation welcomes you—or not. Allow this experience to help shape the way you treat visitors who visit your congregation in 2013 and beyond. TM

We should embrace 'missional'

In the June issue, Ron Adams makes the proposal to replace the word "missional" with "bearing witness." He argues that a new term is needed because we are befuddled by the word missional. Adams has a point but also misses the point that bearing witness is an essential aspect of being missional and helps us understand the concept of missional more clearly. And there is more to being missional than bearing witness.

Adams has a point. The word missional has been misused and misunderstood. Anyone who seeks to shape the church in being a missional community—discerning where God is active and participating with God in God's mission—is aware how many have molded the concept into their own image of ministry.

And it is likely we Mennonites think our being busy is about being missional, which he describes as a "pervasive anxiety." But what he in fact reveals is that we have a tendency to misuse the term and misunderstand our participation with God in God's mission.

Adams proposes we use another term. I propose we not give up trying to understand what it means for us to be a missional people God is inviting to participate in God's mission.

We need to explore more the missional character of God, God's missional calling upon God's people in order to develop a more integrated understanding of who we are to be as a sign, witness, foretaste and instrument of God's present and coming reign.

In the congregation I serve as pastor, discovering our missional identity has not been easy. One board member said, "Won't this be too chaotic, don't we have to take control?" But over the past two years we have discovered that being missional is not about being anxious or about taking charge or even about setting goals; it is about discerning where God is active in us, our community, our ministry context and our growing in being sensitive to the leading of the Spirit so that we may participate with what and with whom God is already engaged. As proponents of missional church have said, "It is not that the church has a mission, it is that God's mission has a church."

In our community, there is a developing non-anxious presence as we grow in participating with God in God's mission. Ministry or mission is not primarily about our actions or about the church but of what God is actively doing in the world, and we are discovering how the Spirit of God is inviting us as a community of God's people to participate with God in God's redemptive mission in which God is making all things new.

Bearing witness is a key aspect of being missional. However, there is more to being missional than simply bearing witness. Missional means "to send" and is reminiscent of the vision in Isaiah 6:8. And Jesus, before his ascension, said to his disciples: "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Still, bearing witness does not fully embrace the church's participation with the sending or missional character of God. There is no bearing witness without being sent.

None of this suggests that the church wrests or takes control of God's mission away from God. God is the sole initiator and completer of God's mission in the world in which God is making all things new. Yet, in being missional, God seeks to demonstrate God's mission through a chosen people—first Israel, then the church. God demonstrates God's purpose for the whole of humanity and creation through the church. The church is a demonstration community (cf. God's promise in Genesis 12:2-3 to Abraham that all nations will be blessed through his being chosen and sent).

The church never has the right to usurp God's mission, and to the extent it does, it ceases to be the church of Jesus Christ. The church can only be church as it participates in God's mission, which God has initiated and which God is bringing to completion.

Rather than replace the term missional, we should develop a clearer understanding. We need correction and further insight into the character of God; we need to uncover the lenses that lead us to think ministry is about us and our efforts; we need to confess our anxiety and mistrust of God, which wrests away from God what we think God is unable to do; we need a greater understanding of what it means for us to be a missional people who participate with God in God's mission.

In so doing, we learn to recognize that mission is not about us but about God and what God is doing and completing. We need the term missional to understand our being sent by God to participate with God in God's mission of making all things new. TM

Roland G. Kuhl is lead pastor at North Suburban Mennonite Church, Libertyville, Ill.

Ministry or mission is not primarily about our actions or about the church but of what God is actively doing in the world.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Patricia Shelly nominee for moderator-elect

Delegates will vote on the nomination in July 2013 at the Phoenix convention.

Patricia Shelly, nominee for moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA

The leadership discernment committee of Mennonite Church USA announced on Oct. 24 that Patricia Shelly of Newton, Kan., is its nominee for moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA.

The denominational delegate assembly will vote on the nomination in July 2013 during the biennial convention in Phoenix. Shelly is currently in her eighth year of service on Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board.

"We [the Executive Board] were enthusiastic to approve the recommendation for Patricia's nomination," says Richard Thomas, current moderator of Mennonite Church USA and superintendent of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School. "She is committed to Spirit-led discernment, understands organizational structure and brings a good sense of humor. She will be a terrific moderator in leading us forward.

If affirmed at the Phoenix 2013 assembly, Shelly will serve two years as moderator-elect and two years as moderator and chair of the Executive Board. She would succeed the current moderator-elect, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht of Lancaster, Pa., who will succeed the current moderator, Richard Thomas, after the Phoenix assembly.

Prior to joining the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA in 2005, Shelly served as a member of the executive committee for Western District Conference (1985-1989) and later as WDC's moderator-elect and moderator (1991-1993).

She worked with Mennonite Central Committee as a member of the Overseas Peace Committee (1987–1996) and as MCC country representative for the West Bank and Gaza in Jerusalem (1996-2000). She was also a participant in several MCC-sponsored interfaith dialogues with Iranian officials (2007-08). Shelly currently serves as professor of Bible and religion at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., and as core adjunct faculty in Bible at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary—Great Plains, also in North Newton.

"We see Patricia bringing many leadership gifts to this role," says Duncan Smith, chair of Mennonite Church USA's leadership discernment committee. "Her skills in incorporating worship and discernment into the work of the Executive Board will benefit Mennonite Church USA as we continue to seek to live faithfully as a body of Christ."

"My time on the Executive Board has allowed me wonderful opportunities to work with and feel very connected to our unique conferences and congregations across the country," Shelly says. "Culturally, geographically, even theologically, we are a diverse body, and I am energized by this diversity."

Shelly says her years of experience in the Middle East—including leading interterm courses to Jerusalem for her students at Bethel College—have helped cultivate in her a deep respect for the multiform expressions of the Christian tradition.

"Even as some practices—being very different than my own—have stretched me at times, I have been deeply moved by the faith that shines through our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Middle East," Shelly says. "These experiences have given me insight into our journey as Mennonite Church USA, and I am committed to carrying the concerns of the whole church as we move in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit."

Born in Chicago, Shelly has fond memories of the congregations that shaped her at an early age. One such congregation is Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, where she was baptized and currently attends.

Shelly went on to earn a bachelor's degree in 1976 from Bethel College and a master of divinity degree in 1980 from Iliff School of Theology, Denver. She was ordained to Christian ministry in 1985 while serving on the pastoral team at First Mennonite Church in Denver.

She received a doctorate in 1992 from Iliff School of Theology/University of Denver. Shelly has served Bethel College as campus minister/pastor (1986-1996 and 2000-2003), associate professor (1985-1996 and 2000-2004) and professor (2004 to present).

While excited by the nomination to serve as moderator-elect, Shelly recognizes that the strength of the denomination's diversity presents a challenge at the same time. Yet such a paradox is not unique to our time and place, she says.

"All we have to do is read the New Testament to remember that such differences have been a part of the body of Christ since the very beginning," she says. "As Anabaptists, we were born of the diversity of that very discussion."
—Jenn Carreto for Mennonite Church USA

Resolutions are back, but with a difference

Executive Board issues guidelines for developing statements for conventions.

After collecting input from across the church, Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board (EB) has adopted a revised process for developing resolutions and church statements for adoption at the denomination's biennial delegate assemblies. This new process applies to resolutions to be proposed for discussion at the Phoenix 2013 Delegate Assembly in July.

At the Pittsburgh 2011 assembly, delegates affirmed the "Pittsburgh Experiment," a proposal from the EB to set aside discussions of church statements and resolutions at that assembly in favor of using a process to discern together a 10-year "purposeful plan" with goals and priorities for the church. Part of the motivation for the experiment was that questions and concerns had been raised across the church about the process used to develop and adopt assembly statements and the subsequent use of the statements.

"Following the Pittsburgh Experiment," says Mennonite Church USA moderator Richard Thomas, "we wanted a discernment process that would be open to all and would be based on biblical discernment at the local, area conference and national levels of our church."

In the new process, any member of a Mennonite Church USA congregation—not just delegates to the assembly—may propose resolutions for consideration. The revised guidelines offer a specific framework for developing resolutions based on the denomination's vision and purpose statements and Purposeful Plan. (The Purposeful Plan is organized around seven churchwide priorities: Christian formation, Christian community, holistic Christian witness, stewardship, leadership development, undoing racism and advancing intercultural transformation, and church-to-church relationships.)

The revised guidelines also lengthen the process for bringing resolutions and create space for deeper discernment by the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC), an advisory board comprising representatives from area conferences and constituency groups.

According to Thomas, the impetus for the revised guidelines is to grow in the practice of faithful spiritual discernment.

"An important biblical model for this new way of discernment is to reach an understanding that 'seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us'," he says.

Previously, delegates were able to bring resolutions to a Resolutions Committee during the days of the assembly itself, and this committee was the only group responsible for discerning how to proceed. For the 2013 assembly, resolutions must be received by the Resolutions Committee at least four months before the beginning of the delegate assembly. If the committee members determine that a resolution fits within the new framework, they will submit it to the CLC, which will discern whether to bring it to the delegate body and recommend the percentage needed to adopt it. The CLC may also recommend that a resolution be considered at a later assembly if it requires more time for discernment.

"The reasoning here," says Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, "is that if the CLC can't agree that it's a worthy resolution to adopt, it's probably not a good use of time to put it in front of a group 10 times that size."

There are still other ways for resolutions to come to the delegate assembly. Resolutions proposed less than four months prior to the assembly will require signatures of 10 or more delegates from each of at least three different area conferences and must be approved by the EB. Also, at any time prior to the end of the delegate assembly, the EB and Resolutions Committee may each propose resolutions for action.—*Annette Brill Bergstresser for Mennonite Church USA*

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Harders plant Spanish-speaking church

After years of cultivation, Hispanic church buds in Mountain Lake, Minn.

gracias
al Señor
porque

Rafael Barahona, director of Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education, conducts two-day workshop for Harders and church members.

Church life became too comfortable for Judy and Steve Harder. Sunday morning after Sunday morning, they enjoyed sitting together in the pews at First Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake, Minn.

They would smile and greet fellow worshipers, study the Bible and sing songs of praise. Yet, quietly, they were also thinking, God has more for us to do.

Fast forward five years, and they continue to worship in the same church building, but now they hear greetings such as, "Buenos días, Pastor. ¡Dios te bendiga!" ("Good morning, Pastor. God bless you!")

The Harders are pastoring Iglesia Evangélica Ágape (Agape Evangelical Church), a church plant that holds afternoon services and weekly Bible studies in the First Mennonite building. Ágape was accepted into the Central Plains Mennonite Conference this past July.

I give thanks to God for allowing us to have our own church.—Emelia Sanchez

"Judy and I had been trying to decide what we wanted to do with our spiritual lives," Steve says. "Maybe it was uneasiness with the status quo and going to church and sitting in the pews."

"There are a lot of folks who are unaware of God's love in their lives, and if that means we have to step out of our comfort zone to fill that gap, then so be it," Judy says.

The Harders have been active in Mountain Lake for years, volunteering at the local school, serving at the food pantry, writing grants, and serving with the city tree commission.

They had been noticing the growth in the city's Hispanic population as people sought jobs in the area. Steve, who practices family medicine in a local clinic, decided to attend evening Spanish classes for two years at a nearby university in order to improve communication with his patients.

They recently started a community-supported agricultural farm and market on their acreage in town to promote local, healthy connections to the land. CSA members stop by weekly for their share of the harvest.

Mountain Lake is a rural town with a population of around 2,100, about 135 miles southwest of Minneapolis, in Cottonwood County. The city is off of I-60, which is a main corridor from Denver to Minneapolis. Initially settled by Russian Mennonites between 1873 and 1880, the city now has about 30 percent families of Hispanic and Asian heritage.

Through their daily work in the community, the Harders had connections with many families and observed that there wasn't a local Hispanic church. A spiritual emptiness was evident in a lot of relationships.

In 2003, the Harders took an extended sabbatical to discern God's leading. They eventually happened upon an article in which Mauricio Chenlo, the denominational minister for church planting (a shared staff position between Mennonite Mission Network and Executive Board), discussed his work. In 2007, the Harders invited Chenlo to meet with them along with community members and leaders from the Mennonite churches.

"He gave his presentation about church planting from an Anabaptist perspective," Judy says. "There was enthusiasm and support, so we began having Bible studies in our homes. We'd have singing, prayer and Bible study time. At the beginning, it was just one other person, Josephina Mendoza, and Steve and I consistently. Josephina is an inspiration to me."

Then Pedro Hernandez Soto, a Mennonite from Honduras, happened to be visiting family in the area. He had come to the United States to help Hurricane Katrina victims in New Orleans along with other ministers. He visited the Mountain Lake church, connected with the Harders, and ended up staying with them for the summer. He helped develop the Bible study group, and it grew.

"He connected us to SEMILLA (Seminario Anabautista Latinoamericano, or Latin American Anabaptist Seminary) in Guatemala, where he purchased Sunday school materials," Judy says. "He gave us a lot of connections."

The Bible study group was visited by Martha and Ramiro Hernandez, tutors with Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA), a Mennonite Education Agency Spanish-language biblical training program for new church leaders who do not have seminary training. Hernandez encouraged the Harders to start a church.

"We were like, 'Really?' We're not pastors and don't have any training along that line," Judy says.

They decided to form a church but realized they needed more training. They invited Rafael Barahona and Violeta Ajquejay, IBA directors, to conduct a two-day workshop for themselves and members of the church. The program gave them the tools they needed to develop a strong ministry.

"We sincerely feel this came from God and his working through us," says Steve. "There is no way we could have done this by ourselves."

Iglesia Evangélica Ágape now has about 40 members.

"I give thanks to God for allowing us to have our own church," says Emelia Sanchez, who worships at Ágape.

"We are very happy to be having our second anniversary," adds MaryLu Luna, another member.

"We often think of reaching others outside our borders and forget those who are within our borders," Hernandez says. "We need brothers and sisters (like the Harders) who are willing to work within the borders of our country and reach those who need the gospel. The world has come to us, and I believe we are ready to respond to his calling as a Mennonite church."

"Steve and Judy are doing an important work," says David Boshart, executive conference minister for the Central Plains Conference. "They have busy and full lives, but they heeded a call."—*Wil LaVeist, a joint press release of Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA*

Patchwork Pantry celebrates 20 years

Pantry in Virginia serves an average of 50 families per month.

It's an hour before opening at Patchwork Pantry in Harrisonburg, Va., and clients are already forming lines in the sanctuary.

The Community Mennonite Church (CMC) kitchen becomes a hive of activity as volunteers fill grocery bags with canned vegetables, soup, macaroni and cheese, toilet paper, diapers, shampoo, and other food and household items.

In the fellowship hall, more volunteers arrange interview tables and several dozen chairs for clients to sit on as they wait to be interviewed and receive monthly supplies of food. Seven CMC members sit in the sanctuary with clients, offering a listening ear and a prayer if they want it.

"For those living on little or no income, several bags of free groceries once a month can make a difference," says Sheri Hartzler, volunteer director. "We strive to make clients' experiences at Patchwork Pantry nonthreatening, caring and nonjudgmental."

Last May, Patchwork Pantry celebrated 20 years of feeding Harrisonburg and Rockingham County residents in need. The ecumenically run pantry operates on Wednesday evenings at CMC, where local residents can receive a three-day supply of groceries for the month.

Each week, Patchwork serves an average of 50 families, many of whom make $500 or less per month. Forty local volunteers, including up to 10 CMC members, help each week with tasks such as shelving food, filling bags, interviewing recipients and handing out produce.

Though Patchwork has always been a team effort, Hartzler says the pantry was largely inspired by the positive, eye-opening Mennonite Voluntary Service experience she had 20 years ago at Patchwork Central, a pantry in Evansville, Ind. There, she learned the joys of running a food pantry.

Upon her return to Harrisonburg the following year, Hartzler learned there were no food pantries in the area that were open in the evenings, when potential clients were off work, so she set out to help organize one.

With the help of an interfaith board, hundreds of volunteers, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and numerous donors, Patchwork Pantry opened its doors a year later.—*Ariel Ropp for Mennonite Mission Network*

Board wants a five-year plan for *The Mennonite*

Trends toward free, online content threaten viability of print magazines.

Several days after *Newsweek* announced it would no longer publish its print magazine, the board of directors for *The Mennonite* met to consider the magazine's future as support for print magazines continues to decline.

The board met in Goshen, Ind., on Oct. 19-20.

"Each year we see a small increase in the number of people who read what we publish across three media," says Everett Thomas, editor of *The Mennonite*. "However, readership is shifting from our subscription-based print magazine to the free content we provide on our website and in two ezines (electronic magazines)."

The staff for *The Mennonite* publishes a free, English-language weekly ezine called *TMail* and a free, monthly Spanish-language ezine called *Meno Acontecer*. Rafael Barahona, a staff member with Mennonite Education Agency, edits *Meno Acontecer*.

"We have followed the national trend of providing free, electronic content," Thomas says, "but there is little financial return in doing so. As a consultant with Associated Church Press says, 'We are trading print dollars for digital dimes.'"

During the meeting the board members and Thomas discussed the long-term viability of the business plan currently in place for The Mennonite, Inc., a not-for-profit Indiana corporation.

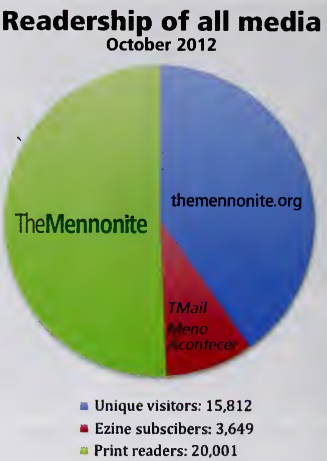
Thomas noted the continuing decline of subscription income and advertising revenue and that The Mennonite, Inc., maintains its viability through generous contributions from readers and through cost reductions.

"This is not a sustainable business plan long-term," says Thomas.

> We have followed the national trend of providing free, electronic content, but there is little financial return in doing so. —Everett Thomas.

The board decided to devote its April 2013 meeting to developing a five-year plan and will invite two Executive Board representatives to participate in the planning: Nancy Heisey of Harrisonburg, Va., and Samuel Voth Schrag of St. Louis, Mo.

In the short-term, the board supported a proposal from Marty Lehman, liaison from the Executive Board, to include *The Mennonite* in the formula whereby undesignated contributions given to Mennonite Church USA are distributed.



Moratorium: Since 1999, *The Mennonite* has had a moratorium on articles and letters that address Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality.

Although the decision to keep or lift the moratorium is a staff responsibility, the board has offered counsel about it at nearly every meeting of the last decade.

At the October meeting, Thomas presented a plan to lift the moratorium and allow a limited number of articles and letters under certain conditions.

According to the plan, articles and letters published would need to have a positive and edifying tone—even if offering critique—and say something new on the topic. If a letter is a response to an article, the author of the article would be given an opportunity to respond to the letter-writer in the same issue of *The Mennonite*. Finally, the number of letters published on the issue would be limited.

Board members responded positively to Thomas' proposal and asked that the new criterion about a letter's tone be used for all letters to the editor, not just for letters on sexuality.

In other business, three officers of the board were reelected: Susan Sommer, Tremont, Ill., as chair; Gerald Mast, Bluffton, Ohio, as vice chair; and Barth Hague, Newton, Kan., as secretary/treasurer.

Due to term limits, Sommer's term ends in July 2013. The board decided to appoint a fourth member to the board's executive committee so that person can be groomed to become an officer after Sommer's term ends.—*Anna Groff*

Missions, schools share history in Puerto Rico

Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Mission Network meet together.

Andrew Bodden

Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Mission Network boards and staff members bless the leaders of Puerto Rican Mennonite Conference institutions and churches at Iglesia Menonita Betania during the joint board meetings Oct. 18-20.

The boards of Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Education Agency found common ground in an unexpected place—Puerto Rico. The boards met together Oct. 18-20—the first time the boards have gathered for an extended conversation—to find ways that their missional and educational goals intersect and to learn about their shared history in Puerto Rico.

According to Paula Killough, Mission Network senior executive for advancement, the purpose of the learning tour was to strengthen relations between the two agency boards and with the Puerto Rico Mennonite Conference, which chose not to join Mennonite Church USA when the denomination formed in 2001. The 400-member Conference became an associate member of Atlantic Coast Conference in 2011.

"Relationships were broken during the merger process in 2001," Killough says. "Our presence in Puerto Rico was an experience of trust-building and reconciliation between the two agencies and with our sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico."

Reconciliation took the form of shared worship, a hog roast and visits to two schools, a hospital and three Mennonite congregations—all institutions with roots in Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Mission Network predecessor agencies.

José Luis Vargas and Linette Colón, the pastoral couple at Iglesia Menonita Betania (Bethany Mennonite Church) in Aibonito, told the history of the Mennonite mission presence in Puerto Rico and gave thanks to God for the legacy that the Puerto Rican church hopes to carry on. The 11 Puerto Rican congregations are active in planting churches in Puerto Rico and nearby Dominican Republic.

"The local setting and schedule provided a special opportunity to learn from each other and from our shared history," says Carlos Romero, MEA executive director, who grew up in Puerto Rico and served as school administrator of Academia Menonita in San Juan. "Most importantly, it provided an opportunity to explore and dream with our brothers and sisters from Puerto Rico about new possibilities on how we can partner in responding to God's call."

Juan Carlos Colón, the Puerto Rican conference moderator, and Brenda Hernandez, a conference leader, emphasized the Puerto Rican church's desire to not dwell in the past but to look forward and strengthen its relationship with Mennonite Church USA. "You are part of our history," Colón said. "Why are we walking separately?"

Many Puerto Rican Mennonites expressed gratitude for Mennonite Education Agency's Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (Anabaptist Biblical Institute) and Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (Hispanic Anabaptist Biblical Seminary) programs that provide the only Anabaptist theological training for pastors and congregational leaders in Puerto Rico.

James Krabill, Mission Network senior executive for global ministries, and Elaine Moyer, Mennonite Education Agency senior director, helped the board members discern how they might enter into more intentional collaboration. *—A joint news release of Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Education Agency*

MennoMedia's first-year loss more than projected

Agency will lay off four of 30 employees and reduce time of another four.

MennoMedia finished its first year of operations with an operating loss of slightly over $259,000. As a result, the new, merged agency of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada has decided to reduce the full-time equivalency of its work force by about 16 percent over the next six months, some of which will come via attrition.

"We had projected that we would have an operating loss but this was more than we expected," said Russ Eanes, executive director on Nov. 15. Auditors recently finished their work on the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012.

Eanes said the layoffs will affect eight of MennoMedia's 30 employees: Four lost their positions and four had their time reduced.

He cited declining income from products such as curriculum and periodicals as one factor. Higher than expected costs for the agency merger in 2011 in moving from Scottdale, Pa., to Harrisonburg was another cause.

"These are especially difficult times," Eanes said. "We continue to experience rapid and somewhat unexpected shifts in our primary business, which is print media. We find that we have to cover more bases, such as having our books in digital formats and more downloadable materials."

As a result of the loss of revenues, Eanes said, MennoMedia is restructuring and retooling the organization for the future to be more nimble, flexible and adaptable to the changing media and technological environment.

"The hardest part of these transitions is the human loss," he said. "We invite prayers for those who have lost positions during this time."

In addition, the Shaping Families radio program, which was airing on 22 stations in the United States and Canada, has been cut due to lack of funding.

"We regret that we have to cut Shaping Families," said Eanes. "It was started three years ago with the hope that it would become listener-funded, and this has not happened. Because of its significant costs to the organization, we have decided to end it at the end of January [2013]."

Eanes also said the needed reductions and the overall direction of MennoMedia were affirmed by MennoMedia's board of directors at a meeting Nov. 2-4 in Kitchener, Ont.

MennoMedia is continuing its partnership with Brethren Press to produce a new children's curriculum, beginning in 2014.—*MennoMedia*

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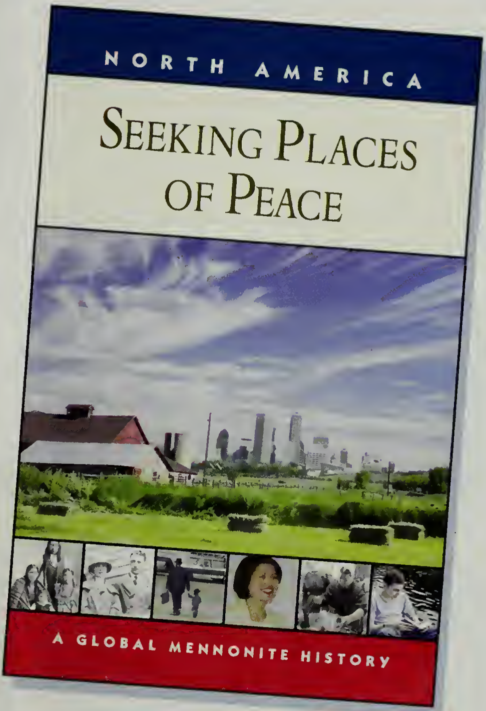

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30 Kenyan church workers meet in Nairobi

Workers object to some elements in Eastern Mennonite Missions training.

Thirty Kenyan church workers met in Nairobi for the Jesus Discipleship Experience, a two-day training event. The training was held Sept. 7-9 and was led by Noah Kaye and several of his colleagues. Kaye, an Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) missionary in South Africa, partners with Floyd McClung and All Nations to disciple church planters and ignite passion for church planting movements.

Kaye, a former pastor of Capital Christian Fellowship in Lanham, Md., explained that discipleship is the primary task for believers. He urged participants to think outside the parameters of typical church programs when they think about missions and church planting.

"Church programs are not the same thing as discipleship," he said. "There is no substitute for intentional, one-on-one and small group/community disciple-making. That's the way Jesus did it, and it works."

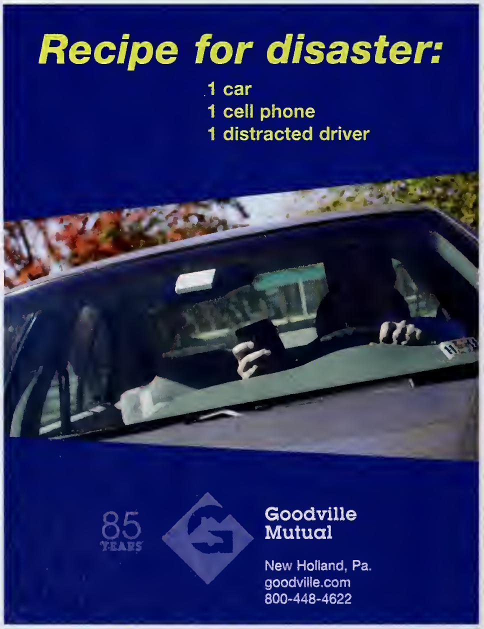
Thomas Reber, Kaye's colleague from Switzerland, passed out empty water bottles to the participants, then poured some water into a bucket that he held under his arm. "When we [conventional pastors] throw a sermon at our congregation, it's like tossing this water over the whole group." He splashed the participants with water from his bucket. "A few drops meet their mark, but most of the water falls into the aisle and hits the back wall. On the other hand, when we work one-on-one, or in small groups with people, we are able to pour our energy and God's truth directly into their spiritual bottles."

Kenyan participants objected to certain aspects of the training: "Maybe this works in the West, but it doesn't fit with our culture."

The emphasis on informal and decentralized groups goes against the grain for local churches.

"It doesn't fit in Western culture either," Kaye said. "We believe this is the way the early church was organized. It is simple in structure and rapidly multiplying. We know of many different places around the world where believers are experiencing dramatic, Spirit-led movements to Jesus, and they are all following the same basic principles."

"Just try it," Kaye said. "Open a space in your schedule to invest in several people, as the Spirit leads you. ... Gather in small groups of people to discover and obey Jesus together and see if you aren't blown away."*—Debbi DiGennaro of Eastern Mennonite Missions*



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Programs of Mennonite Central Committee

Food assistance reaches western Africa crisis

Mennonite Central Committee has received donations of almost $370,000.

Photo courtesy of CFGB/ Emily Cain

Two men carry a bag of millet at a Mennonite Central Committee-supported food distribution in southwest Niger. Names are withheld for security reasons.

As the food and nutrition crisis continues to affect millions of people across the Sahel region of western Africa, much-needed food and longer-term assistance are being provided by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and its partner agencies.

To date, MCC has received donations of almost $370,000. This includes contributions to MCC's account in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB).

MCC is supporting projects in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. The total value of MCC's response is more than $1 million. This includes $250,000 that is eligible for matching Canadian government funds to MCC's account in CFGB.

MCC works through local partners who understand the needs of their communities and use resources provided by MCC to develop effective programs.

In Burkina Faso, rations of food and grain assistance this past summer made it possible for 611 families to eat two meals a day.

Other MCC-supported projects strengthen grain banks, support emergency food assistance and food-for-work and cash-for-work programs.—*Mennonite Central Committee*

Welcome
Dr. David Evans

associate professor of history, mission, intercultural and interfaith studies

"Future Christian leaders will need more than the ability to preach and organize local churches. They will need **peacemaking skills** that draw people into authentic relationships that respect and embrace difference."
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'Day of the Dead' offers living voices

Bethel College class sponsors only public el Dia de los Muertos event in Kansas.

Melanie Zuercher

Maggie Goering, Bethel College senior social work major, paints a face in preparation for the el Dia de los Muertos parade.

At first glance, a giant skull on wheels and children with painted faces seem to have little to do with community empowerment.

Yet that was the suggestion Hamilton Williams, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., associate professor of social work, brought to his Intervention in Human Systems class.

The purpose of the class, Williams says, is "to try and understand community organizing and to do something around diversity for the whole community."

Before coming to teach at Bethel two years ago, Williams was on the social work faculty at Western New Mexico University, Silver City. He participated in the local el Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) parade. It was a major event, he says, involving not only those of Mexican heritage but Native Americans and other groups as well. Catholics and some other Christian groups celebrate Nov. 1 as All Saints' Day and Nov. 2 as All Souls' Day. The latter, in particular, is a time to pray for and remember family members and friends who have died.

For Mexicans, Nov. 2 is an important holiday on which families spend all day at the cemetery, cleaning and decorating the graves of their loved ones and enjoying a meal of the deceased's favorite foods. So Williams was surprised to find, when he moved to Newton, that though there is a significant Hispanic population, most with roots in Mexico, and an active bilingual parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe, there was no public celebration of el Dia de los Muertos.

Williams suggested the parade, and the 12 members of the class responded with enthusiasm. One of the students, Leah Bartel, was interviewing people on their experience of immigration for a research project. She had gotten some names from Father Juan Garza at Our Lady of Guadalupe so already had a connection with him.

Rosa Barrera, assistant to Bethel president Perry White, and her family are longtime members of Our Lady of Guadalupe. When Father Garza came to the parish about five years ago, she says, he began encouraging the congregation to celebrate el Dia de los Muertos. And when the Bethel class approached Father Garza about a parade, he was delighted to join in the planning.

The whole class worked together for weeks to build a giant "La Calavera Catrina" ("the Elegant Skull") float, inviting anyone else on campus who wanted to join in.

Thanks to the 4,000 or so flyers the class printed and distributed, and Father Garza's wide network of contacts, word about the Newton el Dia de los Muertos parade got out into other parts of the state as well.

"At the Council of Social Work Educators for Kansas meeting in Topeka, they were talking about this," Williams says. There is no other public el Dia de los Muertos celebration elsewhere in Kansas. Even more important, he says, the public celebration of el Dia de los Muertos "gives a voice to a minority culture and a day they can embrace [as theirs]."—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

Ami Regier

Bethel College students on the left side, painting faces for el Dia de los Muertos parade: senior social work major Miranda Weaver and senior art majors Samuel Agoitia and Audra Miller

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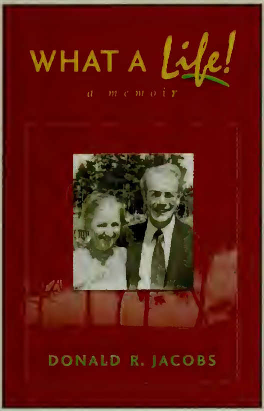
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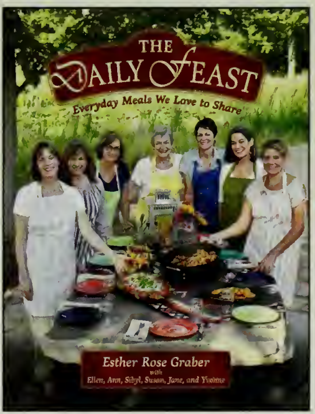
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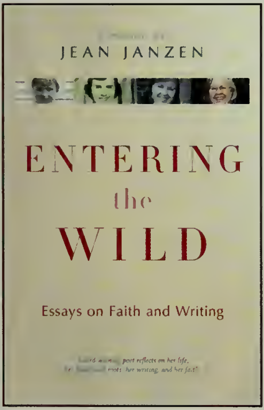
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Christian Peacemaker Teams advocate for Kurds

As war winds down, Iraqi Kurdistan struggles for independence from Iraq.

CPT Iraqi Kurdistan archives

In February 2011, during the Sulaimani Kurdish Spring demonstrations, activists formed "The White Wall," between security forces and demonstrators.

A strong sense of relief permeates the northern portion of Iraq. For many years the Kurdish population appealed to the world community to intervene and curtail the brutally oppressive treatments they sometimes experienced and always were threatened by from Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad. That time has passed.

Since the invasion of Iraq by U.S. and British military forces in 2003, Kurdish residents are discovering they have been liberated to participate in life adventures without the constant fear of surprising and devastating attacks directed toward them from the south. Signs of renewal and restoration punctuate towns and landscape. Extensive construction initiatives reflect a refreshing anticipation that the future of this region seems to be inviting and welcoming.

On the surface, conditions suggest economic prosperity. New houses, renovations of family living spaces, and the presence of late-model automobiles indicate the acquired capacity of individuals to extend their reach into private and public arenas. Foreign corporate investments continue to announce themselves with the erection of taller buildings and the appearance of modern fashions.

Political leaders don the cloak of limited autonomy to execute independent contract agreements between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and foreign investors. This authority allows Iraqi Kurdistan to extend its influence and significance further into the world marketplace. Because of its rich mineral deposits, the Kurdish region enjoys a secure presence on the shopping lists of both private firms and governmental agencies searching for sources of energy to sustain their industrial and civil pursuits.

The relationship of the KRG with Turkey becomes more stable and integrated almost daily. Extensive trading measures constantly provide a source of mutual support and greater interdependence between these two neighbors. Iraq continues to be the most important customer of Iranian products and produce, and Kurdish citizens also benefit from this exchange. Kurdish residents in eastern Syria look to the evolving structure in northern Iraq as a way to fashion their own future.

In spite of many positive aspects of postwar life in Iraqi Kurdistan, elements of unrest and discontent exist as warning signs of future strife. The developing trend of the KRG to become more independent creates growing tension with the Iraqi Central Government in Baghdad. Although primarily focused on the management of oil sales, management of border checkpoints and differing perceptions for providing regional security continue to aggravate this tension. The annexation of the Province of Kirkuk remains a volatile issue that has little hope for a peaceful resolution in the near future.

Restoring the infrastructure is a low priority for authorities in this prosperous region. The government provides intermittent services of water and electricity to the community. Crude oil is transported outside the country to be refined then returned as usable energy sources. Road and bridge construction proceeds at a curiously slow pace. Public schools are overcrowded and understaffed. Although provisions exist for social assistance programs, including community health care, questionable financial management procedures and poor quality control measures prevent them from effectively reaching and benefiting all members of the population. A general opinion believes large-scale corruption to be the norm in how officials mismanage resources intended for community support and development.

Although lacking in recycling programs, waste management appears to be the most dependable and efficient benefit provided to the community. At all times of the day or night, work crews of immigrant laborers collect garbage piled outside stores and residences as well as swept up along busy roads and walkways. The inner city streets are swept during the darkest hours of the night.

The refreshed spirit within the people stimulates private service and maintenance-oriented businesses; however, larger manufacturing and production enterprises are noticeably scarce. Almost all products and produce sold in the markets comes from outside the country. Traditional shoes and clothing for men, concrete and cinder building blocks are the most significant products of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The civil population recognizes that governing policies do not originate from decisions made by lawmakers in the KRG Parliament. Rather, these policies arise from two strong and dominant family-oriented seats of power—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Therefore, the policies discriminate against people outside these self-sustaining communities. Party leaders selectively apply directives according to the advantage they can gain. Equal accountability under a collection of civil standards does not exist.

Public protests organized in the spring of 2011 to challenge discriminatory governing policies—as well as unequal treatment under laws established according to the KRG Constitution—were forcefully dispersed. Eleven people died in Sulaimani from gunshot wounds when security forces retaliated against rock-throwing demonstrators. Several people active in organizing and sustaining the two-month series of demonstrations were subsequently assaulted. Others still live daily under recurring threats made to them and their family members. A few people have left the country to preserve their safety.

Due to the presence of standing private militias employed by the ruling parties, the government lacks the capacity to provide effective security for the entire region of Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus differences in ways of structuring community and providing for its safety—characteristic of numerous and diverse Kurdish tribes in general—have become more apparent now that the threat posed by pre-2003 Baghdad has been eliminated.

In addition, radical groups still operate out of strategic locations further south. Their past violent activities continue to create uneasiness among minority sectors within the country. The trend for Christians to leave Iraq because they feel unsafe continues. Less than 350,000 members of the Christian community that once numbered more than 1 million remain, and the number decreases steadily.

Political leaders in Iraqi Kurdistan continue to search for effective ways to engage two guerilla groups that provoke political structures inside Turkey and Iran. These groups consist of passionate individuals who have organized to resist the occupation of ancient ancestral Kurdish lands sectioned into four nation-states by the Treaty of Lausanne following the First World War.

These educated and disciplined groups conduct aggressive, violent tactics intended to destabilize and disrupt national agendas of Turkey and Iran. Their objective is not only to restore honor and respect for Kurdish culture and tradition present in these regions since the eighth century B.C. but also to recreate a united Kurdistan with a geographical definition similar to the area proposed by the rejected 1920 Treaty of Sevres. Following their actions inside Turkey and Iran, the guerilla forces retreat to safer locations in the rugged Qandil mountains inside Iraq, where they refresh themselves, stage training camps and plan future maneuvers.

In response to these internal skirmishes, Turkey and Iran have resorted to launch military campaigns intended to prevent guerilla bands from easily traveling into their countries from Iraqi Kurdistan. These campaigns target areas along their borders with Iraq believed to support guerilla operations.

Using modern surveillance technology and assisted by the U.S. Department of Defense, Turkey also monitors the movement of people passing across the borders and shares this information with Iran. In an apparent coordinated assault, the two countries launch attacks directed against these softer targets. The reach and scope of these persistent attacks suggests an intention to depopulate the borders entirely.

A devastating consequence of these routine Turkish and Iranian military campaigns along the borders has been the injury and loss of life and property of civilians living in farms and villages passed down to them by their families, which have lived in these regions for thousands of years. Before there were national boundaries, these persevering people had carved out an enriching and sustaining way of life in this sometimes rugged terrain. People who inhabit this land now suffer because they live along this recently imposed boundary, and it has become a war zone.

Predictably, the border attacks begin in late spring, when mountain passage snows melt and cross-border travel becomes less complicated. Living in the border villages in the summer and

(Continued on page 54)

WORKERS

Clancy, Michael, was licensed as lead pastor of Freedom in Christ Fellowship, Lebanon, Pa., on Oct. 7.

Herr, Eric, was ordained as youth pastor of Willow Street Mennonite Church, Willow Street, Pa., on Oct. 7.

Hostetter, Sherill King, was ordained as Eastern Mennonite Missions human resource co-director, Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, Pa., on Sept. 30.

Kraybill, Eugene and Christina, were licensed for chaplaincy ministry with airline personnel at Dulles International Airport on Sept. 22. The Kraybills are members of Northern Virginia Mennonite Church, Fairfax, Va.

Philpot, Thomas, was licensed as associate pastor of Village Chapel, New Holland, Pa., on Sept. 30.

Stevens, Benjamin, was ordained as co-pastor of King of Glory Tabernacle, Bronx, N.Y., on Sept. 8.

Stevens, Hyacinth, was ordained as co-pastor of King of Glory Tabernacle, Bronx, N.Y., on Sept. 8.

OBITUARIES

Adrian, Abraham "Abe" John, 92, Mountain Lake, Minn., died Sept. 30. Spouse: Lorraine H. Radtke Adrian. Parents: Isaac J. and Maria M. Goertzen Adrian. Children: Richard, Verlo, Ruby Jean Scott; seven grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Oct. 3 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Blank, Glenda Deiter, 46, Manheim, Pa., died Sept. 14 of injuries sustained in a bicycle accident. Spouse: William Blank. Parents: Ray and Libby Deter. Child: Emily Blank. Memorial service: Sept. 19 at Ridgeview Mennonite Church, Gordonville, Pa.

Byler, Mariam L. Smoker, 90, Montrose, Colo., died Oct. 13. Spouse: Chester L. Byler (deceased). Parents: Daniel M. and Sadie M. Smoker. Children: James, Gerald "Jerry," Chester Wynn, Janice Auker, Jason, Jon; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 20 at Valley Baptist Church, Montrose.

Eichelberger, Leta Marie Oyer, 85, Lakewood, Colo., died May 9, of a heart attack. Spouse: John Eichelberger (deceased). Parents: Elmira and Samuel Oyer. Children: Douglas, Cynthia Ziegler; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 18 at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood.

Gehman, D. Frederic, 50, Lancaster, Pa., died Oct. 16, of leukemia. Parents: Donald H. and Ruth Eby Gehman. Funeral: Oct. 19 at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

Good, Norman, G., 87, Schwenksville, Pa., died Oct. 25. Spouse: Helen Moyer Good. Parents: William and Emma Groff Good. Child: Rita Hoover; three grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 3 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Graber, Daniel Jacob, 83, Crawfordsville, Iowa and Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 30, of heart failure. Spouse: Mary M. Soldner Graber. Parents: Peter Paul Graber and Magdalena Wenger Graber. Children: Stephen D., Peter N., Jeanne E, Mielke, Georgia; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Grieser, Lloyd, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Oct. 16. Spouse: Elvesta Christner Grieser, Parents: Verden and Nellie Short Grieser. Children: Colette Yoder-Overly, Ron; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 19 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Haarer, David Livingstone, 82, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 25. Spouse: Anna Slabaugh Haarer (deceased). Parents: William and Fannie Eash Haarer. Children: Carlton, Eric, Brian; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 29 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Halteman, Esther F. Keller, 91, Souderton, Pa., died Oct. 2. Spouse: Elwood N. Halteman (deceased). Parents: Erwin M. and Ellen Freed Keller. Children: Harold, Mary Ellen Hartman, Elaine Rittenhouse, Arlin, David; 19 grandchildren; 35 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 9 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Hendricks, Sara C. Shisler, 92, Harleysville, Pa., died Sept. 10. Spouse: William H. Hendricks (deceased). Parents: Horace F. and Maggie Clemmer Shisler. Children: Frank, Carol S. Markley, Gladys Juarez; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 13 at Williams Bergey Koffel Funeral Home, Franconia, Pa.

Hjelmstad, Kenneth Lowell, 59, Golden, Colo., died May 16, of a stroke. Parents: Harold and Doris Shenk Hjelmstad. Step-children: Carmen Cuba Brown, Natasha Cuba; two grandchildren. Funeral: May 16 at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by e-mail, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Hockman, Samuel Harold, 94, Perkasie, Pa., died Sept. 4. Spouse: Gertrude L. Hockman (deceased). Parents: Samuel L. and Ellen M. Stover Hockman. Child: Timothy; two grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 10 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Hurst, Bertha Landis, 92, Lititz, Pa., died Oct. 7. Spouse: Lester Martin Hurst (deceased). Children: Evelyn Stisher, Daryl, Kenneth, Elaine Muschlitz, Dianne Bretz; 12 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Janzen, Samuel R., 91, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 17. Spouse: Lila Mae King Janzen. Parents: J.M. and Margaret Schroeder Janzen. Children: Lois Preheim, Ruthanne Heatwole, J. Melvin Milton, Carla Jacobs, Rebecca Fullmer, Deanna Kauffman, Margaret Abderrahmane; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Oct. 27 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Kauffman, John Jay, 72, Iowa City, Iowa, died Aug. 29, from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Spouse: Loretta Miller Kauffman. Parents: Joseph N. and Wilma Boller Kauffman. Children: Karleen Uitermark, Marina David, LaDonna Abbott, Jonette Kemling; 13 grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 2 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Kleinsasser, Michael Burnell, 58, Bridgewater, S.D., died Aug. 22. Parents: Amos J. and Kathryn Hofer Kleinasser. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Lautzenheiser, Warren Jay, 90, Dalton, Ohio, died Oct. 22. Spouse: Elda Horst Lautzenheiser. Child: Mark; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 25 at Spidell Funeral home, Mt. Eaton, Ohio.

Lauver, Lois Elizabeth, 90, Wykoff, N.J., died Aug. 7. Parents: William Graybill Lauver and Florence Byler Lauver. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Furman Funeral Home, Leola, Pa.

Lehman, Sharon Faye Yoder, 59, Sarasota, Fla., died Sept. 1, of cancer. Spouse: Bruce Lamar Lehman. Parents: Cloyd J. and Mary Edna Stutzman Yoder. Child: Mark. Funeral: Sept. 8 at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Leichty, Daniel Duane, 81, Wayland, Iowa, died Sept. 28. Spouse: Arlene Conrad Leichty. Children: Lonnie, Lora Stauffer, Dean; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 1 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

Martin, Delphine Horst, 78, Waterloo, Ontario, died Sept. 5. Spouse: Lloyd Martin. Parents: Elias and Margaret Horst. Children: Rick, Roger, Brad, Terry, Jackie Giesen; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 9 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo.

Metzger, Peter, 74, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Sept. 18, of cancer. Spouse: Margaret Good Metzger. Parents: Peter and Angeline Bowman Metzger. Children: Tony, Lisa Metzger; three grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 23 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Metzler, Everett G., 81, Goshen, Ind., died July 26, of lung cancer. Spouse: Margaret Joanne Glick Metzler. Parents: Isaac J. and Mae Metzler. Children: Eric, Gretchen Metzler Olson, Malcolm, Andre, Jennifer Metzler; five grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 6 at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Harvey H., 91, Kalona, Iowa, died Sept. 2. Spouse: Salinda Yoder Miller (deceased). Parents: Harvey C. and Mary Fry Miller. Children: Roy, Robert, Mary C. Miller, Elizabeth Miller; eight grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 7 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Miller, Marjorie Lucille Detweiler, 78, Twin Falls, Idaho, died Aug. 20. Spouse: Floyd Miller, Jr. Parents: Clarence and Sarah Slaubaugh Detweiler. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Reynolds Funeral Chapel, Twin Falls.

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Musselman, Marshall, 86, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Oct. 15. Spouse: Mary Cressman Mussleman. Parents: Abner and Gladys Burkhart Musselman. Children: David, Jim, Wayne, Paul, Larry; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 21 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Newcomer, Fern Alice Zehr, 78, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 2. Spouse: Marvin LeRoy Newcomer (deceased). Parents: Alvin and Ruth Lehman Zehr. Children: Jill Erb, Kelly; six grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 6 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Nofziger, Sarah Ellen Roth, 95, Archbold, Ohio, died Sept. 7. Spouse: Olen Nofziger (deceased). Parents: Fred P. and Emma Schmucker Roth. Children: Janice Kreider, Corwin "Cork," Allen, Mark, Marlin; 13 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 15 at North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Penner, Melroy Leo, 82, Mountain Lake, Minn., died Aug. 21. Parents: Peter Isaac and Ana A. Teichrow Penner. Funeral: Aug. 25 at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake.

Regehr, Esther Martens, 66, Waterloo, Ontario, died Sept. 5. Spouse: Henry Regehr (deceased). Parents: Edward and Elizabeth Martens. Children: Jeff, Doug; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 1 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo.

Regehr, Mary Ann Balzer, 88, Inman, Kan., died Oct. 2. Spouse: Eldo R. Regehr. Parents: David F. and Mary Dora Franz Balzer. Children: Wayne, Royce, Jan Pankratz; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 5 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Reimer, Jona, 90, Walton, Kan., died July 19. Spouse: Selma Bartel Reimer (deceased). Parents: David and Caroline Voth Reimer. Children: Delbert, Nadine Reimer Penner; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 22 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

Reiselt, Ruth Elizabeth Goertz, 61, Port Charlotte, Fla., died Sept. 18, of cancer. Spouse: Les Reisalt. Parents: Ernest and Elma Goertzen Goertz. Funeral: Sept. 29 at Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

Replogle, Jesse Lloyd, 99, Martinsburg, Pa., died Sept. 19. Spouse: Sara Kathryn Honsaker Replogle (deceased). Parents: Hiram and Mary B. Rhodes Replogle. Children: Joan L. Ritchey, Donna J. Davis, Pauline K. Ceprish, Roger L., George, Wendell D.; 11 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 24 at Martinsburg Mennonite Church.

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Rheinheimer, Florence Hooley, 97, Shipshewana, Ind., died Sept. 27. Spouse: Raymond Rheinheimer (deceased). Parents: Noah and Sovilla Blough Hooley. Children: Larry, Shirley Helmuth, Karen Coffee, Bonnie Swihart, Lonnie, Lynn Rheinheimer; nine grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 1 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Richard, Margaret Mae Wenger, 93, Wayland, Iowa, died Sept. 15. Spouse: Glen Albert Richard (deceased). Parents: Edward and Elizabeth Good Wenger. Children: Wesley, Duane, Gloria Graber, Lynn; eight grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 22 at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

Ruebke, John H., 77, Hesston, Kan., died Oct. 17. Spouse: Beatrice Brenneman Ruebke. Parents: Henry and Agnes Krehbiel Ruebke. Children: Gwen Janzen, Donald Janzen, Tim Janzen, Rita Wainwright; 15 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 22 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Springer, Betty W. Weber, 95, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 11. Spouse: Nelson P. Springer (deceased). Parents: Henry S. and Mary Ann Burkholder Weber. Children: Ken, Beth Ferrand, Joe, Tina Kenagy; seven grandchildren; one great-grandson. Memorial service: Nov. 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Stahl, Milo D., 82, Harrisonburg, Va., died Sept. 11. Spouse: Viola Diener Stahl. Parents: Dewey and Mary Brubaker Stahl. Children: David, Milonica Stahl-Wert, RaMona Cowardin, Sonya Eberly; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 16 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Waidelich, Marilouise Miller, 77, Archbold, Ohio, died Sept. 7. Spouse: Virgil Waidelich. Parents: Charles and Bessie Frey Miller. Children: John, Michael, Jane Bruner, Matthew; 18 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 11 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Weaver, Sarah Marie Alderfer, 78, Harrisonburg, Va., died Oct. 6. Spouse: Samuel O. Weaver. Parents: Frank F. and Hilda Moyer Alderfer. Children: Janet Fern Weaver, Doris Ann Weaver Leaman, Michael Dale Weaver; five grandchildren: Funeral: Oct. 14 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Wedel, Marie Miller, 96, Moundridge, Kan., died Oct. 21. Spouse: Richard H. Wedel (deceased). Parents: Rudolph and Anna Voth Miller. Children: Kenneth, Keith, Kay McKnab; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 26 at First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge.

Yoder, Merle, 87, Flagstaff, Ariz., died Sept. 28. Spouse: Ferne Shantz Yoder. Parents: Ira Levi and Minnie Brubaker Yoder. Children: Greg, Marilu Salceda; five grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Upland, Calif.

Yoder, Nina Marguerite Bender Bontrager, 94, Kalona, Iowa, died Oct. 7. Spouse: Vernon Bontrager (deceased). Spouse: Dale Yoder (deceased). Parents: Lewis and Barbara Miller Bender. Children: Lynn Bontrager, Gene Bontrager, Gail Bontrager; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; step-children: John Yoder, Kathy Quinn, Dick Yoder-Short, Frank Yoder, James Yoder, George Yoder, Bill Yoder, Dave Yoder; 16 step-grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 11 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Young, Dorothy Ann Keating, 79, Hesston, Kan., died Aug. 10. Parents: Raymond and Beatrice Keating. Children: Susan Motta, Nancy Fox, Michael, Walter; six grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 18 at Schowalter Villa Chapel, Hesston.

A PEACEMAKER'S JOURNEY IN AFGHANISTAN

Making Friends among the Taliban
A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan
by Jonathan P. Larson

Why would Dan Terry follow faith and calling into the political and religious maelstrom of Afghanistan, and—through four decades of war and strife—believe he could make a difference?

Paper. 2012 Herald Press. $11.99

Weaving Life

Visualize the stories of Dan's extraordinary life in this companion documentary. Learn more at www.LarsonJ.com.

DVD. 2012 MennoMedia. $25.95
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RESOURCES

Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder's Trinitarian Theology of Culture by Branson L. Parler (Herald Press, 2012, $24.99) argues that Yoder advocates a trinitarian theology of culture that upholds the continuity between God's work in creation and in redemption. For Yoder, Jesus' humanity makes him directly relevant to culture, while Jesus' divinity connects him directly to creation.

Finding God: A Treasury of Conversion Stories by John M. Mulder (Eerdmans, 2012, $22) records 60 first-person accounts of Christians who found God in different ways and the impact this discovery made on their lives and on the world in which they lived. They range from the first century to the 21st, from the Apostle Paul to the rock musician Bono.

Acceptable Words: Prayers for the Writer, edited by Gary D. Schmidt and Elizabeth Stickney (Eerdmans, 2012, $16), offers prayers that correspond with each stage of the writer's work—from finding inspiration to penning the words to "offering it to God" at completion.

Dust and Breath: Faith, Health and Why the Church Should Care About Both by Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews (Eerdmans, 2012, $14) invites the Christian community into an expansive vision of salvation that includes ministries of health and healing. Inspired by the work of a remarkable ministry in Memphis, Tenn., Hotz and Mathews show why the church must care about both faith and health.

The Heart of Christmas (DVD, 2012, $27.97) is based on the true story of a family faced with losing their child and their quest to give him one last Christmas. When they learn that their son Dax has cancer, Austin and Julie Locke decide to give him one last Christmas, even if it has to be in October.

Emergence Christianity: What It Is, Where It Is Going and Why It Matters by Phyllis Tickle (BakerBooks, 2012, $19.99) gathers the tangled threads of history and weaves the story of the Emergence movement into a whole. Tickle explores the concerns, organizational patterns, theology and most pressing questions facing the church today.

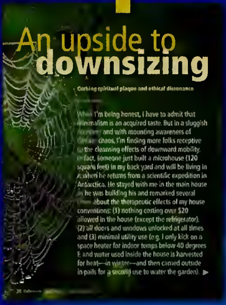
Out of Context: How to Avoid Misinterpreting the Bible by Richard L. Schultz (BakerBooks, 2012, $13.99) uses contemporary examples to explain how the process of biblical interpretation and application can go wrong and how to get it right. Schultz introduces readers to the important concepts of context, word meaning and genre and the differences between the world of the Bible and the contemporary world.

$50 awarded to the winner of each category.
Submission guidelines must be followed to qualify.

2013 TM photo contest

Handling divorce
Somewhere in the midst of this cookie-cutter life, I realized I was miserable.

Photo Illustration
Tim Kauffman, May 2012*



Nature
Dennis Gingerich, Sept. 2012*

Learning to deal with the loss of people who move away
Moving on

Work, Service, Play
Brenda Shelby, Oct. 2012*

Enter your photos in *The Mennonite's* 2013 contest.

Your original work may be chosen for future publication in *The Mennonite*. For submission guidelines and photo categories, go to www.themennonite.org/issues/15-10/articles/Photo_Contest_2013.
Submission deadline: January 31, 2013

* Photo shown as it appeared in print

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) and the **Eastern Mennonite University Bible and Religion Department** invite qualified candidates to apply for a tenure-track position in ***Old Testament and Hebrew Language*** expected to begin August 2013. Teaching responsibilities include Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and Hebrew language courses at EMS and Old Testament and general education Bible classes for the undergraduate Bible and Religion Department. Rank will be determined according to qualifications and experience, assistant professorship strongly preferred.

Qualifications: Applicants must have a Ph.D. or equivalent degree; interest in peace, justice and the theological implications of biblical studies; commitment to contributing to a generous Anabaptism through which to educate students from a variety of backgrounds; track record indicating potential for effective teaching and scholarship.

To apply, send a letter of application and curriculum vitae by e-mail attachment to Michael A. King, VP and Seminary Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, michael.king@emu.edu or mail to 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. The search committee will begin processing by Dec. 1, 2012, and the search will remain open until the position is filled. For more information, visit our website: www.emu.edu/humanresources. EOE

Zion Mennonite Church, a Virginia Mennonite Conference congregation, located seven miles outside of Harrisonburg, Va., is seeking a ***lead pastor***. Zion has an average Sunday morning attendance of 150 that include a balance of families with children, single adults, college students, middle-aged couples and elderly members. Seminary degree and ministry experience is preferred. Interested candidates may contact the Pastoral Search Committee chair, Doug Alderfer, dalder@rockingham.k12.va.us, 540-705-4623.

Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center of Berlin, Ohio, is looking for a new ***executive director***. Duties include general administration, management and promotion of the Center including fund-raising and public relations skills. A good knowledge of Anabaptist history and literature is important. For information or send resume: Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center, P.O. Box 324, Berlin, OH 44610, Attn: Director Search Committee, email to amhcdirsearch@myomnicity.com or call Dennis Hostetler at 330-231-1088.

Mennonite Women USA seeks an ***editor*** to communicate the vision and mission of **Mennonite Women USA**. Responsibilities include oversight of MW USA publications: writing, editing and design of publications, including social media. Eligible candidates will be excellent writers, independent workers and able to function as a team with dispersed staff. Part-time position may be based at home. MW USA is committed to representing diverse perspectives and the global Mennonite church. Position to begin January 2013. For further information, contact co-director Ruth Lapp Guengerich, 64893 Appleblossom Lane, Goshen, IN 46526, ruthg@mennonitewomenusa.org, 574-533-3545

Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., is looking for a ***full-time lead pastor or a husband/wife co-pastor team***. This is our primary interest; however, all applications will be considered. Anticipated starting date is April 1, 2013. Springdale is an active participant in Mennonite Church USA and Virginia Mennonite Conference. Membership is 160 and attendance around 120-130. We are looking for a candidate with strong skills in preaching, pastoral care and church leadership from an Anabaptist perspective. MC USA guidelines for salary and benefits will be followed. Church website: www.springdalemennonite.org. Contact person: Danny Showalter, Chair of Search Committee, email dcs@ntelos.net, telephone 540-943-2392.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Johann, the first novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

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National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health
Department of Health & Human Services www.clinicaltrials.gov Protocol No: 80-M-0083

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What I've learned from Mennonites

Sharon Kniss is in a master's program in International Peace Studies from the Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame.

This will be my final regular column contribution. I look forward to seeing this space occupied by a different young adult voice. Thank you for listening for the past three years, and may we all find space to hear the voices of young, old and in the middle as we journey together.

"You're always finding the third way," said one of my classmates to me. I chuckled at this, noticing immediately the reference (unknown to them) to my Mennonite upbringing. Though I was surprised this wasn't common in a room full of peacebuilders, I noticed how my deeply rooted values instilled from nearly three decades of association with the Mennonite church emerged unconsciously.

I hadn't ever conceived of my faith without a direct daily impact.

I've noticed several such particularities as I've ventured beyond the Mennonite enclaves in which I grew up. I spent three years in the United Kingdom, with only one English-speaking Mennonite church in the country. Its minority representation made clear the unique values and beliefs of Mennonites, one being discipleship. Mennonites espouse discipleship and believe that following Jesus necessitates impact in one's daily life choices. I was amazed to hear this was a new concept for many Church of England and other Christian adherents. I hadn't ever conceived of my faith without a direct daily impact.

I've also noticed distinctives clarified in contrast to my new culture as a student at the University of Notre Dame. I was warned by some friends that the university had money. Notre Dame has a beautiful campus—a real gift for those who cross its lawns and enjoy its lakes and trees and enter its ornate buildings filled with solid wood and marble, some topped with gold paint. Yet I notice my Mennonite sensitivities when I ask, "Does it need to be this beautiful?"

I don't want the campus to be uglier, but I'd call for the abundant resources used in the "perfection" of its beauty to be shared among those who struggle with daily realities like shelter and food. As a Catholic university, Notre Dame prides itself on core ideals of scholarship, faith and, particularly, service. Many of its activities raise money for charities, and it tries to be eco-conscious and emphasize the importance of its students and faculty giving back to the community—both at home and around the world.

I feel a clear disconnect between this strong sense of service and the wealth evident on the campus. The constant consideration of the poor among us—not as charity cases but as real people to be considered—stems from my Mennonite roots.

This fall, I attended Mass, something I'll likely do several times while living in this Catholic world, and recognized by its absence another deeply rooted Mennonite value: community. I entered the sanctuary with just a handful of people, no one speaking a word, and everyone sitting in a pew by themselves. It was a solitary experience.

Mennonites value community. It would be difficult to be part of a worship service in a Mennonite church and not have a conversation with another person or sit among strangers or friends in a pew and not share words. The act of gathering is not only for worshipful acts of prayer and praise but to join other believers in community. There are exceptions. I attended a Mass in which vibrant conversation before and after the Mass took place at a community center positioned to be among the poor in the area. This Mass looked more like a Mennonite church. But overall, I've felt the Mennonite value of community is distinctive when compared with the Catholic world.

Through my diverse encounters I've also learned from those outside the Mennonite church. I've learned about welcome through attitudes of acceptance from Unitarian Universalists and about ritual and sacred space from Catholics. I also firmly believe God cannot be confined and met only within four walls on a Sunday morning and I've appreciated connecting with God through interacting with others, experiencing nature and developing capacities to pause in daily life. Yet I'm also grateful for the important values and beliefs Mennonites have offered me, some of which were taught overtly from pulpits, while others were more a part of the Mennonite air I've breathed. Noticed or unnoticed, I will always carry these with me. TM

FILM REVIEWS

Cloud Atlas (R) is an amazing adaptation of David Mitchell's intricate novel. It melds six stories from six different periods of history, including two in the future, and shows how the actions of individuals, often against repressive systems, reverberate through time. Despite some miscues, the editing here is often ingenious. Those who haven't read the book, however, may have trouble following the narrative.
—Gordon Houser

Flight (R) dramatizes an airline pilot saving a flight from crashing, but an investigation into the malfunctions reveals something troubling. Denzel Washington is outstanding in this exploration of the destructive power of alcoholism and the redemptive power of truthtelling.*—gh*

DVD REVIEW

Weaving Life: The Life and Death of Peacemaker Dan Terry tells how Dan Terry, who worked with many Mennonites through the years, wove relationships, joy, partnership and understanding into his lifelong work in Afghanistan. Terry was among 10 humanitarian aid workers assassinated in Afghanistan in August 2010. The film is made by visual and communication arts students at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. It's a good companion to the book *Making Friends Among the Taliban*, reviewed last month.*—gh*

BOOK REVIEW

Health, Healing and the Church's Mission: Biblical Perspectives and Moral Priorities by Willard Swartley (InterVarsity Press, 2012, $24) surveys three millennia of biblical and theological teaching and practice in congregational life and mission. Swartley seeks to "reclaim the relationship between the Triune God and our healing and health-care efforts." The church, he says, "is called to continue what Jesus began: to be a healing community." This timely book brings together theology and a current crisis.*—gh*

Women confront gender-based violence

The linked problems of sex trafficking and forced prostitution, gender-based violence and maternal mortality claim one woman every 90 seconds, according to a four-hour documentary film shown on PBS stations in October and available online at pbs.org/halfthesky. On the other hand, it is women and girls who are doing the most to change such human-rights abuses across the globe.

Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide is inspired by the book of the same name by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, who are *New York Times* reporters.

The film visits 10 countries, follows Kristof and celebrity activists America Ferrera, Diane Lane, Eva Mendes, Meg Ryan, Gabrielle Union and Olivia Wilde as it tells the stories of inspiring, courageous individuals.

Kristof and WuDunn, who lived in China and reported on events there, became aware that China aborted 39,000 female fetuses in one year, and no one was reporting this. Their focus on human-rights abuses against women grew from there and led to their book.

In the film, Kristof and Mendes visit Sierra Leone, a country recovering from a civil war that ended in 2002. However, the incidences of rape that increased during the war continued afterward, reinforced by a culture where shame falls on the survivor rather than the perpetrator and where laws fail to prosecute rapists.

Kristof and Mendes talk with the director of a rape crisis center, who says they've seen 9,000 survivors in eight years, and 26 percent of these were under 12 years old. She shows them a 3-year-old who had been raped.

Kristof and Mendes talk with a 14-year-old who says she was raped by her "uncle," who is a pastor. Others have also said he attacked them. They go with the police, who arrest the man. They talk with him, and he denies the charge.

In the end, he is released, and the girl's father expels her and her mother from his home because she brought shame on the family.

The lesson is that rape is unfortunate but forgiveable, while being raped is punishable. Less than 1 percent of the rapes reported to authorities are prosecuted.

Next, Kristof and Ryan visit Cambodia and meet the amazing Somaly, who runs an organization that rescues girls from brothels. Somaly, who speaks four languages, was taken from her village at age 10 or 11 and sold to a brothel at age 12 and brutalized. Later she escaped and now helps girls in similar circumstances.

While the problem can feel overwhelming, she says, "everyone can do something." The most important tool in fighting sex trafficking and other gender-based violence is education.

The film next visits Vietnam, where the organization Room to Read helps girls gain access to good education. One girl bikes 17 miles to her school.

In many poor families across the world, girls are kept at home to work, while boys are more likely to receive education beyond the fifth grade. One Vietnamese father, whose wife had died, sacrifices in order for his daughter to attend school.

The film notes that schools are often a safe haven, that education is transformative. It's also a great investment in a community because "when you educate a girl, you educate a village."

This documentary is both hard to watch and inspiring. It presents a huge problem long ignored by most of us (though Mennonite Women USA has been addressing sex trafficking) yet offers hope. The film is definitely worth seeing. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

Christian Peacemakers Teams (continued)

(Continued from page 45)

fall months means being vulnerable to attacks at any moment. The attacks come without warning. If people are fortunate, they can hear the impacts getting closer to their homes. When this happens, they have time to gather a few personal items and start the trek toward safety.

Sometimes they are not so lucky. Impacts have killed and injured residents living in border villages. Last year alone, 11 people were killed and another dozen received substantial injuries requiring medical attention. When the pattern of attacks became more frequent, most families left their village homes and searched for temporary shelter elsewhere.

Evacuation from their homes required villagers to leave behind their property, livestock, crops, orchards and irrigation systems. Animals were scattered and often killed either by bombs and shells or by land mines, some dating back almost 100 years. Crops dried up, orchards burned up or were set afire, and houses and community facilities, including schools, were damaged or destroyed.

Some village residents risked their lives by going back to the border to work their farms and care for their animals, orchards and crops. Usually the men would walk distances of up to 30 kilometers back to their villages, while the women and children remained in the safer and bleaker Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Some of the men never returned. Two bodies of farmers were found near their border homes. The circumstance of their deaths is still a mystery.

Because of the relatively peaceful conditions that prevail in postwar northern Iraq, the suffering and losses sustained by the border villagers have been of little significance to most people who live here. Most people are not directly impacted by the bombing and shelling assaults in the border regions. Compared with the widespread consequences of previous assaults served up by Saddam Hussein against the Kurdish population, the discomfort associated with border attacks prompted little concern.

In 2006, Christian Peacemaker Teams relocated from southern Iraq to Sulaimani, a substantial city in eastern Iraqi Kurdistan. CPT intended to engage power structures that initiate the border attacks on civilians. The team established contact and nurtured relationships with several IDP camps —temporary refuges for more than 800 families that had been forced to evacuate their village homes because of the bombing and shelling campaigns along the Turkey and Iranian border with Iraq. Meager provisions provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and KRG agencies gave them minimal protection and means of survival.

CPT teams accompanied displaced border village residents to meetings with the UN commissioner, the U.S. Consulate, members and committees of the KRG Parliament and numerous local and regional governing officials as a way to assist them in telling their stories of disruption and destruction and loss. Teams conducted investigations, recorded interviews and published reports documenting the results of this routine violation of civilian life along Iraq's borders with Turkey and Iran.

Last year, for the first time since its arrival, CPT conducted a series of public protests on behalf of village residents whose lives were being sacrificed to the border attacks. Since the spring of 2011, security officials would not issue demonstration permits. CPT stood alone in these protests not only to plead for a suspension of attacks that targeted border villages but also to protect the displaced residents from governmental harassment.

Local news media published accounts of the weekly actions CPT conducted in front of the Iranian, Turkish and U.S consulates and the KRG Parliament. About one-third of the KRG Parliament membership passionately presses for political measures that will challenge the border attacks that reach into Iraqi Kurdistan territory. However, because of a dependency need to keep border checkpoints open for goods and produce to be transported into Iraq from both Turkey and Iran, political pressures have not been applied. At least they have not been reported.

Some people suspect that because KRG officials do not speak strongly to oppose the border attacks, a secret agreement may exist between the KRG and Turkey and Iran that condones this response to the guerilla tactics of "terrorist" forces operating out of the Qandil mountains in northeastern Iraq.

No one can confidently predict what will happen in Iraqi Kurdistan during the next 10 years. Some people believe civil war within the KRG is inevitable. Some people see a scenario where the security forces of the KRG clash with Iraqi Central Government forces. And some people expect that because of extensive foreign investment in northern Iraq, sufficient measures will be taken to prevent any disruption of business transactions.

Democratic rule is a new concept in the KRG, and learning how to implement it continues to be a challenging and delicate process. Political leaders have not yet cultivated enough power to embrace it.

However, in spite of abuse and discomfort and physical and emotional assaults, some individuals persist in finding a way to make the vision become reality. These people are showing the rest of the population what true courage looks like.—*Garland Robertson for Christian Peacemaker Teams Iraqi Kurdistan*

Signposts: A community on the way

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.—2 Corinthians 5:20 (TNIV)

Not long ago, a middle-aged woman shared with me her concern about the state of the church. Although she has been part of a Mennonite church all her life, she sometimes feels like a misfit. She worries that our church has lost its focus on Christ as the source of our salvation. She feels that we mostly invest our energy in getting people to reconcile with each other, with too little concern about getting people to reconcile with God.

I assured this woman that she has a valid concern. That's why I'm so excited about the identity-defining document we call "Desiring God's Coming Kingdom: A Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan for Mennonite Church USA." It clearly says that "Jesus is the center of our faith. We claim him as both Savior and Lord. Just as God calls us to believe in Jesus for salvation by grace through faith, God calls us to follow Jesus, to become members of a new community and to invite others to join us on this journey."

The statement also makes it clear that while we are signs and agents of God's kingdom, we are not the primary agents. "Authentic witness to the kingdom is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us." This is a basic understanding of the missional church, as explained below.

Missional character trait: There is a recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the kingdom of God.

Signpost: There is a widely held perception that this church is going somewhere—and that somewhere is more faithfully lived life in the reign of God.

To be reconciled to God means more than a first-time commitment to Jesus Christ in which we are saved. It implies an ongoing relationship to be tended. It means that we allow God to inspect all areas of our lives, some of which are ripe for reconciliation.

The same is true of our relationship with others. All of us live in situations where we need reconciliation with others—perhaps even a spouse or members of our immediate family. If we haven't made peace there, it hinders our reconciliation with God. Further, as Ched Myers and Elaine Ens insisted in their 2011 Bible study in *The Mennonite*, the gospel has broad economic and social implications. If we truly follow Christ, no part of our lives will be left untouched.

We may at times be tempted to confuse our identity or loyalty between the kingdom of God and our nation, or perhaps even with our church programs. We must remember that Jesus comes not only as a friend but also as a stranger, to every culture and people group in the world. Therefore we cannot be faithful as Christ's ambassadors unless we truly live under the reign of God.

Jesus comes not only as a friend, but also as a stranger, to every culture and people group in the world

That means we must often come to God through the cross of Jesus Christ, aware that our own sins may stand in the way of showing others what it means to be reconciled to God. Our primary work as ambassadors is not simply to point people to the cross but to bring them with us to the cross, where together we seek God's mercy and grace. That is the very heartbeat of a missional church. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

God needs Marys

Everett J. Thomas

We know God is all-powerful and omniscient. But God is also impotent and continually asks us for our help.—Bishop Desmond Tutu, Leading Age Convention, Oct. 21

Bishop Tutu was making a provocative point in his keynoter speech: God needs our help. Wait. What? God needs our help?

Among the biblical examples Bishop Tutu cited was Mary, the mother of Jesus. Luke describes the angel Gabriel coming to Mary and telling her how the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and "the power of the Most High will overshadow" her, and she will bear a son. Gabriel said that the child born to Mary will be called "Son of God."

Mary accepted this role. In response to Gabriel's explanation, she said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord: let it be to me according to your word." In doing so, she helped God have his only begotten son.

Through a bit of role playing, Bishop Tutu pretended to be Mary in this scene: "You want me to do what! No way. Try next door."

Mary is the model for us as we respond to the ways God asks us for help.

A second biblical character Bishop Tutu cited was the boy with the loaves and the fishes that Jesus used to feed the 5,000 in Matthew 14. Noting that God fed the children of Israel with daily manna for 40 years, Bishop Tutu described Jesus' request as needing help to feed the crowd.

How does this notion that God needs human help square with our "missional church" language: God is at work in the world, and we are called to join in with the work God is already doing to spread the kingdom?

If it is true that God is at work in the world and needs our help, this means others around us are responding to God's call. That makes sense: There are millions of Christians praying for wisdom and then responding to the urgings of God's Spirit.

Many of us are included, and some stories we tell in this magazine are testimonials to this faithfulness. We share stories of people in our church who are Marys.

For others of us, however, the challenge is to develop or increase the ability to hear and see the ways God may be speaking to us. One reason for our difficulties is the way we sometimes pray: "Please, God, be with Susan who is hurting. Please, God, be with the poor Jones family that has no gifts to give their children this Christmas."

As others have said, we are God's hands and feet in the world. We are the listening ears, the shoulders to cry on. If our prayers begin with such an understanding, then our petitions will be quite different: "God, please help me know what to say and not say when I talk with Susan. Please help me know the right way to help the Jones family that needs help so it's clear the credit and any glory goes to you."

The word for this is "magnify." It means we are instruments through which God's presence, truth and grace is made large. This is why Mary sang her song in Luke 1:

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness
of his servant.
Surely from now on all generations will
call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things
for me,
and holy is his name.

This Advent and Christmas season, Mary is the model for us as we respond to the ways God asks us for help.—*ejt*

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